

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly  
First Session

PARLIAMENTARY RECORD

Tuesday 21 November 1989  
Wednesday 22 November 1989  
Thursday 23 November 1989

Tuesday 28 November 1989  
Wednesday 29 November 1989  
Thursday 30 November 1989

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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

HEALTH SERVICES

COMMUNITY SERVICES

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
HEALTH SERVICES

COMMUNITY SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
HEALTH SERVICES  
COMMUNITY SERVICES

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**NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Fifth Assembly  
First Session

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PART I

DEBATES

## DEBATES

Tuesday 21 November 1989

Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

### PETITION

#### Crematorium for Darwin

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table a petition, together with attachments, relating to the provision of a crematorium for Darwin. The front page of the petition bears 2 signatures and is in order. However, the attachments containing 1175 signatures do not conform with standing orders.

Leave granted.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 1175 citizens of Australia requesting that the Assembly approve \$180 000 for the construction of a crematorium in the Thorak Regional Cemetery. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker, the Chief Minister, the members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, this humble petition signed by over 1000 residents of Darwin and the Northern Territory respectfully showeth the great necessity of a crematorium for Darwin and the Territory. Ours is the only capital city in a territory or state in Australia without the amenity of a crematorium, thereby inconveniencing a great number of its residents who have to incur an astronomical amount of money to have a body cremated in another state. The request for a crematorium is reinforced by the fact that approximately 48% of deaths in Australia lead to cremation. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly approve the required funds of \$180 000 for the construction of this facility in the Thorak Regional Cemetery, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

### STATEMENT

#### Northern Territory Trade Expos in Hong Kong and Shenzhen

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I report with considerable pride and pleasure on the undoubted success of the Northern Territory trade exhibitions in Hong Kong and China this month. Honourable members will recall that, in previous statements in this place, I said that the chief purpose of the 2 Northern Territory expos in Hong Kong and Shenzhen was to raise significantly the profile and reputation of the Northern Territory in these extremely important trade arenas. There is absolutely no question that this target was reached handsomely. We - and I speak on behalf of the joint government and private sector team which put the expos together - did that beyond our expectations. I believed beforehand that these events would be a watershed in the history of Northern Territory development. I know now that that will certainly prove to be true.

In November 1989, the Northern Territory has arrived as a trading entity in Asia. We have all learned in the past few years that we cannot look to the



south for the growth that we need to thrive economically. The interstate migration rush to the Territory, which followed the rebuilding of Darwin after Cyclone Tracy, faltered in the mid-1980s and the trend actually reversed in 1986 and 1987. The reality is that, in the Australian scene, the Territory is the smallest of the 7 state traders, the most easily forgotten and the most easily dismissed by the Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra power base. We have known for many years that our economic future is linked to the vibrant and rapidly growing economies to the north in Asia and we have been working hard to secure those links.

The expos in Hong Kong and Shenzhen, the interest shown in them and the business that is already flowing from them, have announced that we are new, enthusiastic and resource-rich traders in the region. The Northern Territory Business and Lifestyle Expo in Hong Kong opened on 1 November and continued until 5 November at the New World Plaza in Kowloon. 32 stands and exhibitions were mounted, 19 by the Territory private sector. In all, 48 000 people attended this expo - 23 000 on the final day.

Let me put that into perspective. Two weekends ago, the British government conducted an expensive 3-day immigration and investment exhibition on the island side of Hong Kong, including displays by more than 20 leading British educational institutions. That exhibition attracted a total of 300 people over 3 days. The United Kingdom government attracted 300 people in 3 days - the Northern Territory attracted 48 000 in 5 days. Deliberately, we turned many thousands of people away from our expo by advertising and publicising that we would not be entertaining straight immigration inquiries. In publicity terms, the Territory performed outstandingly. Wide newspaper and magazine coverage, radio interviews and discussions and television appearances accompanied the expo and, indeed, carried on a week after it finished. These related in particular to Territory mud crabs and to the Aboriginal musical and dance group Yothu Yindi.

On behalf of the Northern Territory exhibitors who participated in the expo, I express warm thanks for the excellent efforts of the Aboriginal dance group and its valuable work in promoting the Territory. It worked very hard indeed. I am aware that the group was put under considerable pressure not to attend the expo and I congratulate it on its artistic integrity. Likewise, thanks go also to the crab-tying champions, Bill Lowry and Vicki Bonson, for their untiring promotional efforts under difficult circumstances. Mr Lowry's efforts to keep crabs alive on the balcony of his hotel room cost him many hours of sleep every night.

The Northern Territory seminar program proved to be disappointing, but we learned valuable lessons. On any given day of the year in Hong Kong, one country or more is conducting a trade investment or immigration seminar. The competition is fierce. With the wisdom of hindsight, we count ourselves fortunate that we attracted about 130 people to the Trade Development Zone seminar and about 120 to the tourism seminar. Other seminars on mines and energy, investment generally, professional services and racing and gaming were relatively poorly attended. On the day after the TDZ seminar, the American state of Rhode Island held a trade and investment seminar in the same room of the Sheraton Hotel. Less than 10 people attended. While the Northern Territory seminars were running, the governments of Canada, New Zealand, West Germany, Spain and the Dominican Republic were also conducting seminars in other parts of Hong Kong. In the week after, delegations arrived from Tonga, Jamaica, Fiji, Paraguay and Guam. The week before, the government of Western Australia ran a 2-day education seminar which flopped. The lesson is that the Northern Territory cannot expect to compete in what is probably the world's

most competitive seminar environment just by announcing and advertising a wide variety of seminar programs. If and when we do it again, we will have to concentrate our resources and concentrate on being different, just as we did successfully with the expo itself.

Mr Speaker, I ask you to remember that the Northern Territory embarked on this entire exercise experimentally, not really knowing what reaction would be received. The first 3 days of the expo were initially disappointing in terms of attendance - averaging about 3500 on each day - despite strong publicity and advertising. Experience has now shown us that those were good crowds and better than could be expected on working days. Local exhibition experts told us that we would get big crowds on Saturday afternoon and Sunday, and that proved to be the case. In fact, 23 000 people attended on the Sunday. If and when we repeat the exercise, we will have learned from that experience.

There is no doubt about the quality and the standard of the exhibition put on by the Northern Territory. I quote from a letter received from the manager of the New World Centre, Mr Tom Chan:

We were very pleased to see the high-quality exhibits and attractive decorations that your authority had put up for this expo. It is believed your expo has been one of the best shows we have ever had. The publicity that your expo had generated is also enormous, with reasonably good acknowledgement to our centre. If in the future your authority is going to hold similar expos or even other functions in Hong Kong, we will be glad to entertain.

Mr Speaker, that comes from one of the best-known exhibition venues in Hong Kong, a site which holds exhibition events every weekend of the year. I table a copy of Mr Chan's letter.

I quote now from a letter from Australia's Acting Senior Trade Commissioner in Hong Kong, Mr Peter Deacon:

I congratulate you and the expo organisers on a most professional organisational and promotional effort. During the expo, and particularly on the last 2 days, I talked to most if not all of the participants and they were unanimous in their satisfaction of results achieved; whether establishing new contacts or servicing current clients. It was evident from the crowd on the Saturday and Sunday that the expo generated considerable general interest which of course is a necessary precursor to tourism, migration and investment interest.

Mr Speaker, I table a copy of Mr Deacon's letter. That letter raises the matter of results to flow from the expo in Hong Kong and I will now address this.

In general, it is too early to tell this story yet. For some of the exhibitors, benefits have followed immediately. For others, it will be some time before the runs are on the board. There is also a measure of commercial confidentiality which must govern my comments. It is hardly fair to those Territorian companies which took risks in attending the expo in Hong Kong to release details of the business they are in the process of negotiating, but there are things that can be said safely. For example, we were surprised by the intense interest in Territory real estate ranging from vacant land and suburban homes to office buildings and major accommodation centres. In general, I would have to say that the Territory real estate industry was

distinctly under-represented in Hong Kong and in Shenzhen. The Darwin and Alice Springs real estate companies which did attend will both have clients arriving in the Territory later this week.

Les Loy from Asreal claims his stand attracted more people than any other at the expo. Legal firms gained important new clients and Westpac gathered new accounts which more than justified the bank's attendance. Business migration trade was brisk throughout the expo and more will be heard about this at a later time. Perkins Shipping announced a new direct shipping link between Hong Kong and Darwin. The NT Building and Construction Group, representing several members of the Master Builders Association, look like forming an important new contract in China for trade in construction supply materials. The Darwin gallery, Shades of Ochre, initiated arrangements for the supply of Territory arts and crafts to major Hong Kong architectural companies. The Northern Territory Confederation of Industry organised a meeting with the entire committee of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce at which senior government officers also attended. The importance of this meeting and the keen interest shown in the Territory will bear fruit for years to come. All of the private sector participants at the expo in Hong Kong declared their decision to attend was worth while. The great majority say that they would go again. Most regret that their budgets and the time spent away from Darwin did not permit them to carry on to the expo in Shenzhen where it is certain they would have picked up even more business.

On the government side, it is too early to list comprehensive results. Honourable members will know that, last week, I announced 1 major result and that is a substantial venture in the Trade Development Zone by a consortium of Hong Kong industrialists. The consortium will invest \$20m in the first instance, which will be for 7 factories producing garments, T-shirts, paper products, cardboard cartons, ski wear, candles and textile dying. The second stage development, by the end of 1993, will involve a much larger investment for another 8 factories. There is an interesting side to this new venture that may have escaped the attention of honourable members. The consortium, which is made up of about 10 leading businessmen in Hong Kong, wants to actively pursue the establishment of a direct shipping link between Hong Kong and Darwin running twice a month. The group is also very keen for a direct air transport link between Hong Kong and Darwin and, given the status of the individuals concerned, I would be optimistic that they could persuade a major air carrier to initiate such a move. That is just 1 of the Trade Development Zone results from the expo in Hong Kong.

Important discussions with other groups and individuals were initiated and I would expect substantial new business for the zone to eventuate, particularly in the field of electronic components. Other government departments and authorities gained varying degrees of value from the expo. The Ministers for Education, Primary Industry and Fisheries and Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government will elaborate on particular achievements in relation to their portfolios during the course of these sittings. Some departments and authorities were in Hong Kong to support the Territory lifestyle component of the event and were not expected to gain business. Nevertheless, their contributions were important and helped the Territory raise its overall profile and standing in Hong Kong.

In this context, I must pay particular tribute to the Lord Mayor of Darwin, Mr Alec Fong Lim, who was the media star of the show. The Lord Mayor participated in dozens of media interviews, radio talkbacks and television appearances with grace, style and dignity. His value to the Territory in Hong Kong was unquestioned. On the final day when the pressure was on for the

big crowd, he even doubled up as a dicer and distributor of Territory mangoes on the primary production stand.

The Northern Territory Business and Lifestyle Expo in Hong Kong was enormously successful. Mr Speaker, you do not have to take my word for it - ask the private sector exhibitors, ask the owners of the Hong Kong venue, ask Austrade and ask the many hundreds of senior Hong Kong business people who attended. Finally, I ask simply that you judge the success of this expo by results and that you wait beyond a mere 3 weeks to see these results. It will take time, as little as 6 months and probably as much as 3 years, but there is no question that the expo in Hong Kong was worth the effort and the expense.

To foreshadow inquiries by the opposition, it is too early yet to produce final figures of the cost. However, I anticipate that the project management cost will run about \$40 000 to \$50 000 over the projected budget due mainly to unanticipated problems and transport difficulties associated with taking Territory produce to Hong Kong. One last point on the matter of cost. Honourable members will recall that I mentioned a British government 3-day exhibition in Hong Kong which attracted a total of 300 visitors. According to organisers of that event, their printing bill was almost twice the total cost for our whole expo and seminar programs. I think that puts the matter in real perspective and it reflects nothing but credit on the Northern Territory and the efforts we made in Hong Kong.

Mr Speaker, let me now address the stunning success of the Northern Territory in Shenzhen in the People's Republic of China. With the benefit of hindsight, we geared back too much in Shenzhen. The organisers decided to drop most of the lifestyle component for the expo in Shenzhen and to concentrate purely on trade matters. As well, the Territory's private sector decided it would concentrate its efforts in Hong Kong, leaving the largely unknown expectations of the Shenzhen expo mainly to the government exhibitors. In retrospect, it was a tragedy that the private sector was not strongly represented. Of the private sector representatives in Hong Kong, only Perkins Shipping came with us to Shenzhen.

Whereas Hong Kong is fiercely competitive, we found that Shenzhen was comparatively an open field of opportunities. It was enormously frustrating to deal with large numbers of direct business inquiries relating to banking, finance, real estate and joint-venture proposals in horticulture, fishing and mining without the involvement of Territory companies on the ground. As it was, government officers have brought back from Shenzhen a huge number of business and investment proposals for serious consideration, and many need the active involvement of the private sector. We will still do a great deal of business, but it would have been so much more rewarding if the private sector people who went to Hong Kong could have attended the Shenzhen expo.

The Territory mounted 9 stands at the expo in Shenzhen from 9 November to 12 November. A total of about 7000 people visited the expo, which might seem a small number compared to Hong Kong, but consider this important point. Those 7000 visitors largely comprised official trade delegations from the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone and 21 provinces in China. I think there are 35 provinces in China which are spread across a vast country. They all came to talk business. Shandong Province, which has had a previous association with the Territory in mining interests, sent a delegation numbering 70, and 3 other provinces sent delegations larger than 30. One province alone came to the expo with more than 50 written and researched business proposals. In all, we were overwhelmed. We could not do anywhere near to justice to the interest in the Territory that was shown.

Senior government officers from the Department of Industries and Development, the Trade Development Zone, the Department of Mines and Energy and the Department of Education were overtaxed conducting interviews and briefings of trade delegations often prepared to talk immediate business. They have returned to Darwin with a backlog of work that will take many months to sort through. They have returned also with a remarkable experience of the trade opportunities available to the Northern Territory in China, and I foreshadow that the government will be giving urgent attention to the follow-up action required.

More than 400 business and investment proposals are now being examined as a result of the expo in Shenzhen. Apart from the many major Chinese organisations which have branch offices in Shenzhen, serious investment proposals which deserve our close attention were also received from the provinces of Guangdong, Hainan, Henan, Beijing, Hunan, Sichuan, Anhui, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhenjiang, Guangxi, Shengyan and Shanxi. Of these, I estimate that investment totalling more than \$150m is highly likely to occur. It is certainly very possible. Much of it will be in the Trade Development Zone, including factories producing knitting and embroidery, fish netting, plastic goods, latex gloves, leather shoes, denim wear, machinery parts, cosmetics, cable shielding, universal joints, rubber seals, printing machinery, pumps, lathes, door locks, medicine and steel building products. One province alone proposes 26 factories in the zone.

As in Hong Kong, there was tremendous interest in Territory land and real estate, particularly relating to agriculture and horticulture proposals and, unlike Hong Kong, of major interest were the Territory's mineral and energy resources. We accepted many proposals for joint ventures with Territory mining companies in new and existing mine developments, with particular interest in gold, tin, copper, manganese and bauxite. Territory officers signed 3 memoranda of cooperation with Chinese mining provinces which will bring about exchanges of information and technology. I foreshadow a major mineral development in the Territory, with Chinese interest, and this was the subject of a meeting that I conducted in China.

I am grateful for the enthusiastic cooperation of Shenzhen authorities which ensured the success of the Territory's expo. The official opening was attended by the Mayor of Shenzhen and his 2 Vice-Mayors. The significance of that will be lost on most honourable members, but I assure them that it gave the highest stamp of approval, and it was the subject of much surprised discussion in diplomatic circles. I note there were murmurings in Darwin about the Northern Territory contravening official Australian government guidelines through the expo event in Shenzhen. Of course, that is simply ill-informed rubbish. Our expo was attended by the senior Australian Trade Commissioner in China and Austrade representatives from southern China. Austrade even had a stand at the expo.

Let me also put to rest any suggestion that the Northern Territory is offering so-called 'special financial deals' to Chinese business proponents. The fact is that any venture by Chinese organisations in the Trade Development Zone will receive the same package of incentives that is available to any other participant in the zone, whether that participant be from Hong Kong, China, Adelaide or Winnellie.

There is no doubting the goodwill of the Shenzhen authorities towards the Northern Territory, nor the importance of the Territory's expo in their eyes. I quote from the speech of the official opening by Vice-Mayor Zhou, an important regional figure:

The Shenzhen SEZ is an important window representing the opening of our country to the outside world. It is the most forward position of China opening to the outside world. Your coming here to take part in the exposition is of great significance to the promotion of real understanding and the improvement of economic and technical exchanges and cooperation between China and foreign countries.

The Shenzhen SEZ is making extensive cooperative ventures with both inland China and abroad, so as to greatly enhance our own development aims and to improve our role as a window to the world.

The exposition will undoubtedly play a significant part in promoting the SEZ's foreign-orientated economy.

Mr Speaker, those words from Vice-Mayor Zhou are important and meaningful. I table a translation of that speech.

It was pleasing to host, as an exhibitor at the Shenzhen expo, the SZ Australia Group, which will be starting manufacturing operations in the Trade Development Zone next month. SZ Australia, a company which spins off from the huge Shum Yip organisation, is investing \$20m in its first stage operation. By the mid-1990s, it will be the largest private sector employer in the Northern Territory, employing about 800 people. I should make it quite clear that the majority of those employees will be Territorians. As a matter of perspective, honourable members should know there are some specialist skilled workers that need to be brought out as key workers.

Mr Smith: Why won't they all be?

Mr Perron: Because we do not have enough of them.

Mr Smith: What, through the 1990s? Midway through the 1990s, we will still have visitor skilled workers?

Mr COULTER: Yes, they will be. You wait and see. Remember you said that. Remember the day you said that.

Mr Harris: We do not have enough of them. We never have enough of them.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, let us have a look at this company. Shum Yip turned over \$US32 000m in the last financial year, recording a profit of \$US6000m. Honourable members might correct me here, but I think that Atlas Copco is about the thirty-sixth largest company in the US and it turns over about \$US2000m profit. Thus, we are talking here ...

Mr Collins: Turnover or profit?

Mr COULTER: Profit. Shum Yip's profit was \$US6000m and therefore we are not dealing with a fly-by-night organisation. We are dealing with the very biggest of the big. It supplies about 90% of all foodstuffs and perishables for Hong Kong daily. Remembering this, listen now to the words of Mr Qu Jin Kui, General Manager of the SZ Australia Group and a Shum Yip director, during a speech of welcome to the Territory delegation - and he is a great man, Mr Speaker.

This evening the SZ Australia Group congratulates our Australian guests on the success of the first Northern Territory exposition ever held in Shenzhen. As known to all, it is especially with the help

and assistance from the Australian Northern Territory government, the Darwin municipal government and the TDZA that SZ Australia Group has gone through the stages of preparation and establishment. Our project in the Trade Development Zone is now getting on smoothly in accordance with our expectations.

Once again, allow me on behalf of my whole staff and Board of Directors in SZ Australia Group to extend our sincere thanks to the Northern Territory government, the TDZA, and people from all walks of life who have rendered us great support either materially or spiritually. Our project is under construction now but there is still a lot of hard work ahead of us. The whole working staff of SZ Australia is determined to make great efforts to complete our project on schedule.

As an English proverb goes, 'actions speak louder than words', and we would like to express our heartfelt thanks to our Northern Territory friends with our actual deeds. We will never let our friends down. We will certainly live up to the expectations of the Shenzhen municipal government and the Sichuan provincial people's government.

Again, Mr Speaker, the significance of those words may be lost on some honourable members, but I tell you that they give me great heart as the minister responsible for overseeing development in the Territory and the Trade Development Zone. I table the translation of those words.

I quote now from a letter from Mr Hong Ron Mun, Director of the Shenzhen Science and Technology Centre which hosted the expo:

The Shenzhen Science and Technology Centre congratulates the government of Australia's Northern Territory on the success of its trade expo in Shenzhen. The expo was the most professional, foreign exhibition seen in Shenzhen and attracted major interest, not only in Shenzhen but throughout the People's Republic of China, with more than 20 senior delegations attending from provinces throughout the People's Republic.

Inquiries and investment proposals were dealt with in a courteous and professional manner and have further strengthened the bonds of friendship and economic cooperation between the People's Republic and Australia's Northern Territory. The Shenzhen Science and Technology Centre is proud to have been associated with this event, and looks forward to continuing cooperation and the staging of further such events in the future.

Mr Speaker, I table a copy of that letter.

Mr Speaker, you can see that the success of the Northern Territory's expo in Shenzhen was unqualified. In some respects, we were too successful. Important decisions lie ahead about levels of investment in the Territory from China and about the Territory's future presence as a trader in China. We need to make up our minds just how serious we want to be about this. It would be tragic to let all this interest and goodwill evaporate through our own lack of action. Over the next week or so, organisers of both expos will be conducting extensive debriefing sessions with all the exhibitors to gain input on what went right, what went wrong and what follow-up action is required. As well, I plan to involve the Confederation of Industry in a seminar which will look at the expos and what has emerged, with a view to coordinating the efforts of the Territory private sector with those of the government.

The Territory went to Hong Kong and Shenzhen with high hopes and not a little uncertainty. We have succeeded beyond our expectations but that is only the first chapter in this supremely important economic and development story. My thanks and congratulations go to all the government and private sector people who organised these magnificent trade events and who staffed them and made sure that they were as successful as they undoubtedly were. It gives me great faith in the abilities and capacities of Northern Territorians.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I read and listened with considerable interest to what the honourable minister had to say on this matter. I think it is appropriate to start by congratulating the minister on the exercise that has been undertaken in Hong Kong and Shenzhen. From the carefully chosen words of the minister, it is clear that a good deal has been achieved and that there is potential - and I think we need to stress the word 'potential' - for further extended developments with both Hong Kong and mainland China. It was pleasing to hear the note of realism in the minister's statement which contrasted with some of his previous comments on related matters. For example, who can forget that, in June 1988, he promised that we would have, almost immediately, a Darwin-based synthetic fuel plant, a Darwin-based LPG stripping plant ...

Mr Coulter: We will get it.

Mr SMITH: ... a synthetic paper manufacturing plant, an ethylene glycol plant, gas reticulation to Darwin homes and a cyanide plant, not to mention a uranium enrichment plant.

Mr Coulter: It is a year closer.

Mr SMITH: The minister says that it is a year closer. I was advised as recently as yesterday that it will be many years before any one of those projects looks like coming to fruition. I am pleased to note, however, that ...

Members interjecting.

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

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am pleased to acknowledge the note of tempered realism and tempered expectation in relation to what we might achieve in the next 6 months. As the minister said, we will not really know the results of the expos for the next 6 months to 3 years. I share the minister's enthusiasm about what has taken place. I share his feeling of excitement about the possibility that we may have tapped into a major area. However, there are a few things that I want to say about how existing efforts might be improved on and what we need to remember.

One of the significant things in the minister's statement was not so much what was included as what was left out. What was left out was any mention of how existing Territory business - apart from the few high fliers who went across to Hong Kong - might be tied in with the developments that are occurring at the Trade Development Zone and with the developments that we hope will occur in the zone and elsewhere. I think that is a very important issue.



Too often, we forget and ignore the efforts of people in business in the Northern Territory at present. We take them for granted. We seek exciting new projects and flavour-of-the-month businesses without giving any thought to how existing businesses in the Northern Territory might benefit from the process. I would like the minister to address that matter at some time, perhaps in his summing up. It was a glaring omission in his speech and I know that there is a very strong feeling among the small business community that its needs and interests have not been considered.

New businesses are going into the Trade Development Zone, but many local businesses cannot see the possibilities that arise from that as far they are concerned. Obviously, that is a very important issue. We do not want to see 2 economies developing in the Northern Territory: one that basically proceeds without government assistance and which has been doing its own thing and growing as fast as it can, and another which is based in the Trade Development Zone, receives considerable government assistance, is isolated from the rest of the business community and is not contributing in any overall fashion to the growth of the Northern Territory economy. Let us hope that that does not happen and that the 2 sections of the Northern Territory economy, the Trade Development Zone and the general business community, can be tied together so that small business people who have committed their lives and livelihoods to the development of the Northern Territory can share in the benefits of the investment which we hope will come from Hong Kong and mainland China.

The other note of caution that I would like to sound relates to comments which have been made by people like the Chairman of the Trade Development Zone Authority. The newspaper reported him as saying to a group of Hong Kong businessmen: 'We would like you to do to Darwin what you have done to Hong Kong'. Such bald statements worry and concern people in the Northern Territory. They worry and concern both the small business sector and people generally. People do not want to see a Hong Kong in the top end of Australia. They do not want to see their community turned into a high-rise metropolitan jungle like Hong Kong. They do not want to see a lifestyle modelled on the Hong Kong lifestyle. They do not want to see the Northern Territory becoming famous, or perhaps infamous might be a better word, for taking on third-world jobs. The whole matter has to be handled with some care and discretion. That is my basic point. We have an exciting opportunity ...

Mr Perron: Are you saying that Australians cannot do the job? Third-world jobs?

Mr Manzie: That is the most racist remark that I have ever heard.

Mr Perron: Because Australians aren't there to do the job.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, the star of Teddy's Bar will get his opportunity to say something a bit later. The key message ...

Mr SETTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I find that a very objectionable remark. I take it that it was addressed to me, was it?

Mr SMITH: If the cap fits, wear it.

Mr SETTER: The cap does not fit and I am not going to wear it.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, obviously I hit a soft spot.

My basic message today is this: we have a considerable opportunity and we must do it right. That is the important thing. Let's do it right, and I want to take up that theme in relation to the Trade Development Zone. In the zone, we have the kernel of a textile industry. At this stage - and I hope that this will not always be the case - it is supported by unspecified and unquantified taxpayer-funded incentives. Basically, that industry is giving jobs to semi-skilled and unskilled people. We have an industry which, at this stage, does not in any way integrate vertically or horizontally with the established economy. If it does that in a meaningful way, I would like to hear about it. We have there a 2-tier work force: a temporary work force of non-English-speaking employees from China, and local employees. It is considerably better than nothing, but it is certainly a long way from the best. What we need to be attempting to achieve in the Trade Development Zone in general is the best. That is the nature of the Labor Party's commitment. It is a commitment to excellence and to make the zone work for all Territorians. Perhaps members opposite might demonstrate clearly to us how the zone will work for all Territorians.

Mr Coulter: You said 2 years or get out. That is what you said on 15 November. You were going to close it down.

Mr SMITH: I said 2 years of a Labor government.

Mr Coulter: You did not.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, part of this exercise in getting the best is to involve significant sectors of the community in the process right from the start. I refer specifically to the union movement. The honourable minister's attacks on the union movement show that he still has some way to go in learning how to get the job done properly and how to do the best for the Northern Territory.

The union movement has had specific and considerable concerns about the operations of the Trade Development Zone. That is not the fault of the Trade Development Zone operators because it has become very clear indeed that incoming businessmen to the Trade Development Zone were encouraged to believe that the unions were irrelevant. Incoming businesses to the Trade Development Zone were not told the basics of Australian industrial practice. As I said, the businessmen were not to blame. How could they meet the standards when the standards were concealed from them? Businessmen from Hong Kong and China have come into the Trade Development Zone and have not really known what to expect. For example, we have had Hong Kong businessmen who have been surprised that, in Australia, overtime work is voluntary and cannot automatically be demanded.

The minister's attacks on the union movement are not in defence of the zone employers. He has been trying to defend himself. The unions have told us that the employers were simply not told what was expected of them. For instance, they were never told about workers' superannuation requirements. They had only a hazy understanding of awards, let alone award restructuring. It is a significant point that the workers in the zone were awarded a 3% increase a month ago but that that still has not flowed through into their pockets.

I turn to safety standards. I have here the eye protection which, until recently was offered to workers in the Trade Development Zone who deal with sensitive materials like bleaches. This plastic bag with strings attached is the apron which I understand is still used at the Trade Development Zone for industrial protection. That is simply not good enough.

Mr Finch: Put some flowers on it.

Mr SMITH: Some member opposite is saying that that is good enough, is he? That is simply not good enough.

Mr McCarthy: Have you ever heard of recycling?

Mr SMITH: The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, who is responsible for health and safety matters in the Northern Territory, asks if we have heard of recycling. I would like Hansard to ensure that that is recorded. That will get around the public service and the private sector. That is a completely irresponsible comment from the minister responsible for work health matters in the Northern Territory. Part of the problem is that the Northern Territory government and its ministers are not taking their responsibilities in this area sensibly. We must get the safety standards right. Let us do it correctly. Let us put in place in the zone an industry which hopefully will expand and which has proper safety standards so that the workers are not at risk. There are other things going wrong in the zone. Many of them still do not have standard seating. The temporary workers do not have standard seating. Some do not have adequate first-aid kits. The unions cannot even obtain the facts about what the temporary workers are paid or how they are paid. These are basic union issues that are not being resolved at present, and they underline the frustrations that the union movement is experiencing.

I understand that the crunch will come in March, at the next scheduled tripartite meeting. That crunch will come if the agreements that have been reached in respect of safety conditions have not been carried out by March. What I am saying is that there is a role for the Trade Development Zone to become involved in those sorts of issues. It cannot stand back and say simply that it is a matter between the employer and the union. If the Trade Development Zone is to expand to its full potential, it must ensure that basic industrial conditions in the Northern Territory are put in place.

That is one of our major concerns. Another major concern is the necessity to have the correct mix of industries in the zone. I must admit that I am encouraged by the minister's statement that indicates that, some way down the track, we might be getting a wider range of industries. We certainly do not want to be known as the toothpaste, cardboard boxes and candles capital of Australia or the world. We do not want the future of Darwin to be the past of industrial Sydney and Melbourne. This is one of the major points. What we are seeing is that, unless it is very careful, the Northern Territory will go against what has happened in the rest of Australia and the rest of the advanced world.

It is fair to say that we are getting beyond the factory stage into a post-industrial revolution, and it is not terribly foresighted of us to be delving backwards, rather than forwards. Let us do it right - and, as I said, I was encouraged by the honourable minister's comments - with the mix of jobs that we bring to the zone. Let me point out one of the practical problems. Until the 3% increase, textile workers in the zone had an award wage of about \$300 a week, before tax. Now the problem in attracting people to a high-cost area in the Northern Territory is that that is \$150 a week below the average weekly wage for women. In other words, in a textile factory in the zone, we are offering two-thirds of the average weekly wage for women in the Northern Territory.

A member: So?

Mr SMITH: So, that is a trap that we can too quickly fall into and that we need to be careful about.

Mr Coulter: Do you know what the unemployment benefit is at the moment?

Mr Perron: It is a lot less than \$300 a week.

Mr McCarthy: He would much sooner see them on unemployment benefits.

Mr SMITH: I make the point again that we do not want to develop a reputation in the Northern Territory whereby we are known as the haven in Australia for low-income jobs and, in this case, jobs offering only two-thirds of what the average weekly earnings are for women.

To make the point again, Mr Speaker, that is why I was encouraged by the honourable minister's comments that, in the future, we might be able to attract more highly-skilled jobs into the Trade Development Zone.

Mr Coulter: There is no more highly-skilled job than a linker, I can tell you that now.

Mr SMITH: If there is no more highly-skilled job than a linker, perhaps we need to look at how much they are paid.

The other interesting point is that textile industry jobs are held mainly by women. It is an interesting argument indeed that, unless we are very careful, we are saying to the women of the Northern Territory that their main employment prospect will be in the Trade Development Zone earning \$300 a week.

Another potential trap that I find particularly significant is that we are spending a great deal of time and money on our education system to raise our educational standards. We are encouraging people to remain at school at least to Year 10 and, hopefully, to Year 12, yet we have a Trade Development Zone which, at this time, is operating in the reverse direction to this. It is saying that people do not need formal skills, that they can be trained on the spot and will be offered jobs paying \$300 a week. I accept that the industries there have given credibility to the zone. I want to make it very plain that, on this side of the House, we see it as a stepping stone and we are not prepared to be satisfied with industries in the zone that are paying women two-thirds of the average weekly earnings in the Northern Territory. We demand and expect something better, and we think it is possible to have that.

Mr Speaker, let me say that again clearly. We accept that those industries are there. We accept that they have brought credibility to the Trade Development Zone, but it is time to broaden our horizons as well. To give the honourable minister credit, he indicated that there were prospects there. I would ask the honourable minister to ensure that priority is given to putting in the zone jobs that provide more satisfaction for people and that provide a higher level of income. Let us do it right and establish enterprises in the zone which offer the full spectrum of employment opportunities to our children.

A related point is that the fundamental rationale of the zone was that it would lock into the existing Territory enterprise economy ...

A member interjecting.

Mr SMITH: Well, I have to say to you that I do not resile from it at all. There are jobs and there are jobs and, frankly, I am not happy with the continuing effort made by this government in spending \$45m of taxpayers' money to this day which results simply in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs in the Trade Development Zone. We need to lift our horizons.

Mr Reed: What do they buy to eat?

Mr Coulter: What about their kids?

Mr SMITH: On \$300 a week, they will not be able to afford to have kids. That is part of the problem.

Mr Coulter: That is why we are getting people from Tasmania for the employment that you are disparaging.

Mr SMITH: I am not disparaging anybody. All I am saying is that we need to look very carefully at what we put into the Trade Development Zone and, as I said in my office a day or 2 ago, the one good thing about the government's approach, particularly if it continues its present line, is that it will create 6000 Labor voters in the Northern Territory.

The related issue that I started on was that there has to be a much greater effort to tie the operations of the Trade Development Zone into the broader economy. We have not seen that. The honourable minister's speech was silent on that issue. It is a very important issue and it has to be addressed. There is enormous alienation in the general business community about the amount of money that has been spent at the Trade Development Zone and about the results that we have seen so far. It is time that the government came clean on the types of incentives that are being offered to firms to come to the Trade Development Zone.

We have never promoted the belief that firms from China have been offered more than anybody else to come to the Trade Development Zone, and that is in fact irrelevant. What is relevant is that the firms that are coming to the Trade Development Zone are being offered a significant range of incentives to come here which are not being offered to Territory businesses, and that is a point that will cause more and more concern to those people who operate successful businesses and, indeed, less than successful businesses outside of the Trade Development Zone. We need to know how taxpayers' funds are being spent. What sort of incentives are being offered? We need to know whether the government is honouring its statement of a couple of years ago that, as the zone got on its feet, the range of incentives offered would be reduced. Those are legitimate questions to which the taxpayers of the Northern Territory should be able to expect answers. However, knowing this government's refusal to be responsible in the expenditure of taxpayers' funds, it is not likely to provide those answers.

We would like to know, for example, what assistance is given to the Trade Development Zone under the establishment and expansion grants, under loans and financial guarantees, under consultancy and feasibility study assistance, under industry design assistance, under industry housing assistance, under research development and invention assistance, under exemptions from local taxes, under land and factory packages, under relocation of machinery and equipment and under export costs. That is a pretty comprehensive list of incentives which the government offers to firms to enter the Trade Development Zone.

Let me give an example of how assistance under one of those headings would be of enormous assistance to industries attempting to operate in the electorate of the member for Nhulunbuy. I refer, of course, to industry housing assistance. The full potential of Nhulunbuy as a regional service centre is not being reached because of this government's refusal to put in place an industry housing assistance scheme in the town. It will not provide the first level of assistance to industries outside the Trade Development Zone. We have a situation in Nhulunbuy where one of the larger employers has actually had to buy houses in order to have some hope of keeping employees in the town for a reasonable time.

To return to the minister's statement and my opening comments, the 2 expos have identified a number of important opportunities for the Northern Territory and it is important that we do it right. Doing it right means using our skills, our resources and our enterprise to their maximum. It means building on the base which exists here, not ignoring it. Mr Speaker, if you want evidence that the government is largely ignoring the existing manufacturing and industrial base in the Northern Territory, have a look at the minister's statement. We need to set up manufacturers which integrate with that base and share our development goals. We need to bring together all the elements of the development equation, including the unions, in the process of ensuring that we provide the best possible facility in the Northern Territory for businesses, whether they be from overseas or interstate. We need development agreements which ensure the maximum level of local input.

I would like the minister and the Chief Minister, who I understand is to speak in this debate, to indicate that this is what we will have. I would like them to tell us what we are giving firms in terms of incentives. I would also like them to tell us what the government is demanding from these firms. Is it demanding for example, that they buy their scissors and their plastic bags in Darwin? Or is it left to the firms concerned to determine where they obtain their raw materials and their office prerequisites? I would have thought, Mr Speaker, that most people ...

Mr Reed: The socialist plan for the Northern Territory.

Mr SMITH: Yes. And it works too, because it brings more business to the Northern Territory. Are there any such things as development agreements which work out, on an organised basis, what sort of return the Territory taxpayer will obtain for this enormous investment?

Mr Vale: Jobs, jobs, jobs.

Mr SMITH: As I have said, there are jobs and jobs. As a Labor government, we intend to pursue enterprises that offer jobs that will keep our tertiary trained children in the Northern Territory. Most importantly, we intend to deal openly and publicly with all potential zone enterprises so that the taxpayer of the Northern Territory knows exactly what it is costing him and what he is getting in return. This is a good start. Mr Speaker, I congratulate the minister on his statement, but let's do it right.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, it appears from what we have heard today that the Leader of the Opposition has finally done a 180° turn in relation to the Trade Development Zone. I guess I have to see that as being a degree of good news. It is sad, however, that it has taken some 3 years for the Leader of the Opposition to decide that perhaps the zone will work after all and therefore he had better climb on the band wagon and support it rather than continue the opposition he has had not only to the Trade Development Zone

but to most of the initiatives taken by this government. As the Deputy Chief Minister has often said, it seems that you cannot do anything in the Northern Territory without taking a great deal of flak. We have done nothing worth while in the past without carrying the significant handicap of people who want continually to drag us from the saddle.

At first, he wanted to shut down the zone. In his view, it had had a reasonable run and, if the ALP had had a chance, it would have sold it. Now that he can see that it is moving along nicely and beginning to gain significant momentum, he no longer wants to shut it down. Indeed, he can see a role for its expansion. I think it is marvellous that we have a man here who is beginning to develop a vision. I hope that it continues.

To touch on a few of the points that he made, firstly he does not want to see 2 economies develop in the Northern Territory. He described a TDZ economy and a non-TDZ economy in the Territory. I would be happy if there were a dozen economies in the Northern Territory, provided they were all contributing to the Territory's economic development and creating employment for Territorians and for new Territorians who would have to be brought here to fill the jobs because there there would be an insufficient work force here. I would not mind how many economies we had. I doubt very much that there are 2 separate economies but, if there were, I would like to know how that would disadvantage us. One must assume that, if it is not good to have 2 economies, it would be better not to have 1 of the 2 economies that exist. I cannot see how that would put us in front. The Leader of the Opposition said that the TDZ economy, 1 of the 2 economies that he talked about, was not really contributing to the Territory economy.

It is quite amazing that the Leader of the Opposition, who has been in the Assembly for some years and hopefully has developed some experience and expertise in that time, cannot see before his eyes the benefits to the Northern Territory economy of the Trade Development Zone. Industries in the zone do not pay payroll tax, stamp duty or municipal rates, and I suppose that is what causes the Leader of the Opposition to claim that the TDZ economy does not contribute to the Northern Territory and is therefore not quite as good an economy as the non-TDZ economy.

Whether the Leader of the Opposition thinks that the TDZ economy is integrated vertically, horizontally or not at all, I can assure him that all the activity in the Trade Development Zone very significantly and directly supports the Northern Territory economy. That begins when people come to Darwin as potential investors to look at the Trade Development Zone. At their own expense, such people stay in our hotels for a few days whilst looking around and receiving briefings. That is an early component of the benefits to the economy. There are probably benefits prior to that stage when promotional materials, including videos and printed matter, are prepared in order to encourage such people to come to the Territory to consider whether they would like to invest here.

After people decide to establish in the Trade Development Zone, they either buy or rent houses outside the zone in areas where stamp duty and payroll tax apply. They have to organise transport for their workers who must also be provided with food and entertainment. The factories which they build are often equipped with high-tech machinery, such as the latest computerised knitting machines. Such machinery has to be serviced, not by companies in the zone but by companies outside the zone. The buildings have to be built of course. The factories being established in the zone are a delight to see. The area is a hive of activity, with backhoes and other construction machinery

in full operation as we build the factories for firms which are committed to the zone. In many instances, these are custom-designed factories.

A wide range of computing equipment is being installed, including PCs and office computers as well as computers associated with production. All of these computers have to be supplied and serviced. Companies in the zone also require accounting services, legal services, banking services and insurance. None of those services is provided in the Trade Development Zone economy. They are provided from without the Trade Development Zone economy. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that they are making a significant contribution to the Northern Territory. If the Leader of the Opposition has any doubts, let him talk to the real estate agents who are delighted to see a new TDZ participant who wants to find 2, 4 or a dozen units of accommodation for his supervisors, foremen and factory managers. They are delighted.

The Leader of the Opposition was concerned about the mix of industries in the zone ...

Mr Collins: What about the wages of the employees?

Mr PERRON: I will come to the wages in a minute.

He is saying that we do not want to become the toothpaste, cardboard and candles capital of Australia. This ought to be a classic. I think this will rebound on the Leader of the Opposition from time to time because he has overlooked the hundreds of jobs - and, as time goes by, the thousands of jobs - which will be created in the Trade Development Zone. He is suggesting that we should weed out of our application lists those factories which will provide jobs that we might find in some way demeaning or beneath our dignity. Fancy being a candle manufacturer or a cardboard manufacturer or a toothpaste manufacturer! Did it ever cross his mind that some of those employees might find themselves making the best toothpaste in the country or the world? I would suggest to him that there may well be many people working in some of these establishments who are proud of what they do. It may not be the job that will hold them for the rest of their lives. I would think that a number of people who work in factory jobs probably do not see themselves as being there until their retirement. However, it is a phase in their working life within which they can gain some experience and perhaps move on to more highly skilled and more highly paid jobs. Does that mean that we should do away with what he sees clearly as the bottom end of the scale? What on earth does the Leader of the Opposition think of street sweepers, people who mow lawns, wash cars or empty rubbish bins, if he believes making toothpaste, cardboard boxes and candles is somehow beneath his dignity and that our community should not tolerate this sort of thing?

Mr Reed: What the ALP used to call the working class.

Mr PERRON: Yes, Mr Speaker. It is amazing to hear this kind of attitude expressed by members of the Labor Party. It is really astounding. It is beneath their dignity!

Mr Speaker, what about the dignity of being on the dole? How many people on the dole would genuinely like a job, any job? I am sure plenty would because, whilst we say that anyone who really wants to work can get work - and I am a follower of that philosophy - there are situations around Australia in which people find themselves unable to obtain a job no matter what, and their circumstances are such that it is very difficult for them simply to uproot themselves and move somewhere 2000 miles away. I would think that the lack of



dignity that one suffers through remaining on the dole would be such that a person would appreciate almost any job, even that of making toothpaste, cardboard or candles.

The Leader of the Opposition complains that workers in the zone are receiving less than average weekly earnings. I guess that we cannot all earn average weekly earnings otherwise we would all be on the same pay level. You could argue that it is Labor philosophy that there should be a redistribution of wealth and that everyone should be on the same pay level. It is not exactly a philosophy that I have always supported, but we cannot simply all be paid the same rate and stay in business. That is pretty crucial. The Leader of the Opposition has overlooked a crucial point, and that is that there is a relationship between how much you pay people who are working for you and whether you stay in business or not. This new-found guru of business enterprise, the Leader of the Opposition, has decided that workers in the TDZ should be paid at levels that he believes are appropriate. Who is going to tell the people who buy the products from the TDZ factories that the price will rise because the Leader of the Opposition said that all the workers must be paid more money? And will they also tell those customers that they must not place their orders elsewhere, because that would mean that the Trade Development Zone factories would shut down?

The Leader of the Opposition displays incredible naivety when he talks about these things. One would think that he had been on the public nipple all of his life, that he does not know what the word 'competition' means or that such words are simply capitalistic claptrap and that it is a myth that you need to be competitive to stay in business in order that you may create employment. The facts are that the TDZ will be very big as the years go by, and an enormous segment of our economy and our jobs will be there. They will not all be factory-worker jobs. There will be jobs for supervisors, managers, accountants, lawyers and computer people, and for experts at servicing sophisticated machinery, and I am talking about machinery which is at the world's leading edge. As these factories are established, they are being established on the basis that they need to be highly automated because it is true that Australia's wage rates are very high in comparison to our competition in Thailand, Taiwan and other places that have trade development zones and low wages.

Every participant in our trade zone knows that it has to be highly efficient in terms of productivity. Usually they come here to brand new factories which incorporate the latest technology. If you buy new machinery, you buy the latest technology that will be in service for the longest time possible. The fact that that machinery has to be serviced has caused a problem in attracting some people to the zone, but it is a problem which will diminish as time goes by. When there are a dozen factories full of high-tech sewing machines, servicing agents and spare-parts holders for that sort of machinery will establish here. The first participant is taking a big step because he has to fly someone halfway round the world to rectify any major problems with his machinery. However, that problem will diminish as the zone grows. It will attract service personnel, and that will make it easier to sell the zone to other people in the future.

I am asking the Leader of the Opposition not to persist with this mentality that the trade zone offers nothing more than boring jobs for factory workers. I can assure him that it is far more than that. If he thinks that, if all the factories were making electronic components, they would be providing stimulating work for each individual, I can assure him that he is wrong. Some of the assembly lines for high-tech machinery would also involve

fairly boring tasks. I am sure that they are not jobs that people would wish to undertake for all of their working lives.

What we have now is this whingeing and nitpicking about peripheral matters. He has decided that he supports the concept of the zone because it is a winner. Now he wants to do what he calls 'fix it up'. He asks whether they buy their scissors locally. It is amazing, Mr Speaker! We have a businessman who is going to invest millions of dollars. He is moving from one culture to another and has to cope with unions and everything else that he is not used to. In the middle of negotiations, we are supposed to tell him that he will have to buy his scissors in Darwin!

It would be great for Territorians if, for once, the Leader of the Opposition supported a project like the Trade Development Zone from its beginning, not after this government has carried the opposition like an army of monkeys on its back for 3 years before the zone becomes a success and he decides to support it. Perhaps we could have travelled a little faster if we had had his support for those 3 years instead of his carping criticisms about whether the agent in Hong Kong is getting too much money on the side or whether perhaps he is of the wrong nationality to be on our payroll. That is the sort of nonsense that we heard had for years in this Assembly. It is surprising how people continue to work for us over there. Hopefully, they do not read Hansard. I guess that is about the only saving grace that we have.

This opposition would be an absolute failure if it ever achieved government. It has no faith in or vision for the Northern Territory. It is merely negative and nitpicking at every stage. It could never adopt an initiative that would take more than a year to become established and be described clearly as a success because it would not have the stamina to carry it through. It would drop it as soon as it felt that things were becoming a bit warm in the kitchen.

I commend the untiring efforts of the Minister for Industries and Development in his carriage of the Trade Development Zone portfolio in particular. With this portfolio, he has been carrying a cage full of monkeys on his back in the form of members opposite and, to some extent, the odd union representative who chooses to indicate his concerns in relation to the Trade Development Zone on television rather than through the appropriate channels. I commend the honourable minister's dedication in pursuing the expo in Shenzhen when there were suggestions that we should drop it altogether for fear of being criticised for going to China. He was quite firm in stating that the opportunities were very significant and that we were not doing the wrong thing by proceeding to Shenzhen. I believe that we did not do the wrong thing and, indeed, as the minister mentioned in his statement, officers of the Australian government were present. They were not trying to pull down our placards. In fact, I think they were trying their very best to help us do business in Shenzhen. I am sure that a great deal will come from it, and I commend the honourable minister for his statement.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I have a great deal of pleasure in rising to support the statement of the Minister for Industries and Development. During the Business and Lifestyle Expo in Hong Kong, the Department of Education and the Northern Territory University have been most successful in recruiting and attracting students to the Northern Territory. As a result, a great deal of money will be spent in the Territory and that will improve our economy markedly. The main purpose of the involvement of officers of the Department of Education and the Northern Territory University in the Business and Lifestyle Expo was to show that the Territory has all the

essential education infrastructure necessary to meet the educational needs of potential new citizens and the training and research needs of new industries and business. We have been successful in demonstrating this to people in Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangxi through our displays, distribution of printed materials, personal contact with local people in the field of education, government officials and industry leaders. In this respect, I am confident that education has provided significant support to the efforts of the Trade Development Zone Authority, the Department of Industries and Development and private sector exhibitors at the expo, in promoting the Northern Territory's business industry and investment potential.

We also had a number of secondary objectives for education at the expo. I have mentioned those objectives previously in this Assembly. One was the recruitment in Hong Kong of specialist secondary teachers in mathematics, science and computing studies. At this point in the debate, I should make it very clear that the only reason for the need to recruit overseas is because of the current lack of qualified and trained staff in Australia in those fields. Naturally, we would prefer to have locals in these very important positions. All we can do to achieve that is to ensure that courses are available at the Northern Territory University to train teachers in those fields and to encourage primary school teachers to upgrade their qualifications in maths and science. We have tried previously to generate interest among primary teachers in upgrading their qualifications but we have not been successful. Unfortunately, as a result, we have had to go overseas. I must stress that this shortage of maths and science teachers and other special education staff applies throughout Australia.

The other point that needs to be made very clear is that the people recruited overseas meet our requirements in terms of qualifications. They are also proficient in English. That needs to be spelt out very clearly because of recent comments in the media which made it appear that the teachers being recruited overseas cannot speak English. That, of course, is a load of nonsense. We received over 300 applications for these positions and, during the period of the expo, approximately 160 teachers attended seminars conducted by officers of the Department of Education. Over 100 teachers attended individual interviews. Approximately 40 of the teachers interviewed had the appropriate qualifications and teaching experience and are suitable for employment in the Northern Territory Teaching Service.

I will make it clear at this stage that the Teaching Service Commissioner, David Hawkes, wrote to the Secretary of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation in relation to staffing conditions. In that letter, he spelt out clearly the position in relation to 4 points which had been raised. He stated that employment would be 'offered on a fixed-term basis for 3 years on terms and conditions normally available to permanent members of the Northern Territory Teaching Service, with the exception that repatriation provisions would be available at the conclusion of the terms of appointment'.

The Secretary of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation wrote back to the Teaching Service Commissioner and, after taking into consideration all the matters which had been raised, said that the federation was in agreement with the commissioner's position, as spelt out in his letter, in relation to the 4 points. In other words, the actual conditions as outlined by the Teaching Service Commissioner were agreed to by the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. The 40 teachers who have been interviewed will form a pool from which we can fill vacancies when necessary, thus helping to overcome the acute shortage of teachers in particular subject areas, a shortage which is being experienced not only here in the Northern Territory but throughout Australia.

It is appropriate at this stage that I comment on remarks made on radio recently by the Secretary of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. Those remarks were indeed racist. The secretary was commenting on the overseas recruitment. He commented to the effect that all attempts to utilise teachers recruited from overseas had resulted in dismal failure. Could I just say that a number of teachers who have been recruited from overseas are in top positions in our schools. They have a very important task in the overall education system here, and I was quite surprised by the comments made by Col Young in that regard.

Mr Smith: Was that racist?

Mr HARRIS: He was saying, in fact, that the teachers from Hong Kong were no good.

A member interjecting.

Mr HARRIS: If you had listened to that interview, he was inferring that people were coming from Hong Kong, that they were all of Asian origin and that there was a problem. I should also point out that some of those teachers come from other countries - from New Zealand and England and elsewhere - and those recruited are not necessarily of Asian origin.

The expo generated a great deal of additional interest in job opportunities in the Northern Territory among teachers and other professionals and, along with the Department of Labour and Administrative Services we are continuing to receive new applications. It should be noted that Hong Kong has a high standard of training and work practices in teaching and other professional areas and may provide a useful source of such people where the Territory is unable to recruit locally or from within Australia.

Another of our objectives in Hong Kong was to promote the Northern Territory as a place of study for overseas students. There was lively interest from potential students at all levels, including fee-paying secondary students. During the expo, interviews were conducted with a number of potential students at both TAFE and university level, and some 20 offers to study in the Territory have been made. For example, 12 offers have been made to Hong Kong students to undertake tourism and hospitality training at the Alice Springs College of TAFE's Gillen House facility. The income to the Northern Territory from these 13 students alone will amount to some \$460 000 in direct payments of fees and accommodation costs over the next 3 years.

In addition, as a result of the expo and our other efforts to attract students from this area, we anticipate applications from some 100 students for the university and for TAFE and secondary school places during the 1990 student enrolment period. If we refer to the statistic that, for every 100 students there would be an income of approximately \$2m for fees and accommodation, it is clear that there are tremendous spin-offs for the community. Over the next 6 years, if we obtain 100 students, some \$6m will be injected into the economy.

Two officers from the Department of Education and one from the Northern Territory University also attended the expo held in Shenzhen in the People's Republic of China. They indicated that there was an overwhelming interest in Northern Territory education from potential students, parents, government officials and educationalists. Our officers met with senior education officials from Shenzhen, Guangxi and Guangdong Provinces and the Vice-Presidents - in our terms, the Vice-Chancellors - of 3 other provincial

universities in China. Officers visited the University of Shenzhen, the University of Guangxi, and the Shenzhen Adult Technical and Vocational College, and met with senior officials from these institutions. There is great potential for the development of cooperative educational projects with these institutions, including student and staff exchanges and the export of Territory education expertise to these institutions and others in the region.

It was apparent that Chinese officials see education as a very significant area for potential cooperation, and we see such cooperation as a potential gateway to a range of business, industry and economic opportunities. As an example, education officers arranged a visit to Guangxi following the Shenzhen expo and were immediately invited to meet with senior trade, foreign affairs and education officials. Originally, they were also to meet the Mayor of Guangxi but, unfortunately, he was called away to Beijing on official business.

In light of the range of officials wishing to meet our officers, they asked representatives of the Department of Industries and Development to accompany them, and a number of very significant contacts were made including meetings with the President of the China Foreign Trade Centre and the General Manager of the Chinese Export Commodities Fair, the Canton Trade Fair, the Deputy Director of Foreign Affairs Office of Guangdong Province and the head of Guangxi's Department of Education. The meeting with these officials resulted in an invitation for the Northern Territory to participate in next year's Canton International Trade Fair which the government will be considering in the near future.

Departmental officers visited the University of Guangxi to meet with the Vice-Chancellor, and found that the university is structured along similar lines to the Northern Territory University with a large polytechnic or TAFE component attached to that university. There is significant potential for close links between the Northern Territory University and the University of Guangxi, and the Northern Territory Department of Education and the Guangxi Department of Education. We will be pursuing the potential for such cooperation in the near future. On other occasions, the Vice-Chancellor of the Northern Territory University commented about the possibility of having exchanges between lecturers from such institutions as well as exchanges of students.

It should be noted that such cooperation, as well as providing points of contact from which potential economic development projects may arise, can be of direct financial benefit to the Northern Territory in that we have specific education and technological expertise for which the Chinese are prepared to pay. The experience of the 3 Department of Education personnel involved in the expo in China was that there is an overwhelming interest for potential students to study in the Northern Territory. Although, by agreement with the Australian government, we were not able to become involved directly in recruiting students during the expo, interest was so high that a seminar was organised to provide basic information on studying in the Northern Territory. It was anticipated that approximately 100 people would attend that particular seminar. As it turned out, over 300 attended the seminar, which lasted for some 3 hours rather than the 2 hours that it was originally scheduled to last. There is no doubt that, provided satisfactory immigration arrangements can be made, our university and TAFE institutions will have significant student enrolments from the People's Republic of China over the next few years.

It is interesting to note that, during the expo in Shenzhen, a number of students expressed particular interest in undertaking postgraduate studies,

including PhD study, in a number of disciplines at the Northern Territory University. It is also significant that a number of parents expressed particular interest in secondary schooling for their children in the Northern Territory and that organisations from Hong Kong and China have expressed interest to officers of the department in establishing both private school facilities and boarding facilities for students studying in government schools. Officers of the department will be following up these matters in the very near future. It has the potential to provide to us facilities that are required to offer educational opportunities to isolated students in the Territory. I will be looking forward with a great deal of interest to the results of those discussions.

The visits to Hong Kong and China by officers of the Department of Education and the Northern Territory University and our participation in the Business and Lifestyle Expo have proved to be extremely worth while and we are well on the way to realising our objectives. As we anticipated, there is significant potential for recruitment of staff and fee-paying students bringing immediate economic benefit to the Northern Territory. If we are successful in enrolling 100 students in the Northern Territory, we are looking at some \$6m over the next 3 years. There is also very significant potential for educational cooperation and the export of educational expertise and technology to China, bringing not only direct educational and economic benefit, but providing also a gateway through which potential opportunities for business and industry cooperation and investment can be explored. There is much work to be done in following up leads and opportunities established during the expos and I am confident that this follow-up will provide significant benefits to the Northern Territory in the future.

Mr Speaker, I will close my comments by supporting the Chief Minister in his remarks about job opportunities and job-creation. Where the Leader of the Opposition seems to be falling down is that he is seeing it merely as people at the trade zone. He is not looking at the wider picture. He is not looking at the spin-offs that will come to the Northern Territory business community. As a result of this expo and others that I hope will occur in the near future, we will be able to develop the Trade Development Zone and make use of our opportunities to provide education to people from those countries that are our near neighbours to the north. All of that generates dollars into our economy. We need those dollars. We should all be supporting the efforts of the Minister for Industries and Development in trying to attract investment to the Northern Territory. I commend the honourable minister for his efforts in this regard, and I support his statement.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, in rising to support the statement of the Minister for Industries and Development, I do not wish to go over what has been said already about the expo itself. The very negative response from the Leader of the Opposition has been replied to. I would like to talk about those aspects of the Hong Kong expo that relate to the recruitment of personnel to the Northern Territory Public Service.

In the very early stages of organising the Hong Kong expo in particular, the government realised that the results of the exercise would spread far more widely. There was no doubt that the expo would attract a great deal of interest in the Northern Territory as a whole. The government is also aware of the acute difficulties experienced in attracting qualified professional people to the Northern Territory Public Service. It has been claimed by members opposite that this has resulted from salaries and conditions of service available in the Northern Territory. I think that recent events

indicate that that is not the case. The response to the Northern Territory's recent national recruitment campaign were enough to show that we have no problem holding our own in the recruitment stakes. The campaign that we carried on within Australia attracted many hundreds of applications from across Australia to a wide variety of positions.

Whatever salary package we offer, some positions will always be hard to recruit to within Australia. It is a fact that, in the majority of professional areas in which there are shortages in the Northern Territory, there are also very significant shortages throughout Australia. Professionals such as doctors, lawyers, nurses, medical specialists, pharmacists - although they might become a little easier to recruit if the federal government continues to tighten the noose around their neck - architects and planners are difficult to recruit everywhere in Australia. Even the federal government has recognised that the only way to find qualified professionals in many of those areas is to cross the ocean.

When the trade expo in Hong Kong was mooted, this government decided to seek professional people to fill positions in the public service that we had been trying to fill for a long time. Hong Kong has a highly professional work force. Many of its people are deeply concerned about what their future holds. It is a fact that many professional men and women from Hong Kong are already looking to other countries for employment. Many of these people have already sought positions in the United Kingdom and in Canada. However, there are also many who see Australia as the ideal country in which to make their future. Once they were told about the Northern Territory, this part of Australia was where they wanted to come.

There is a range of reasons why the Territory is attractive to the people of Hong Kong. Our proximity to their present home is perhaps one of the greatest, but also we boast a similar climate, a cosmopolitan city and a region which will be one of the focal points of Asian trade in years to come. Hong Kong people moving here will also enjoy a much improved quality of life. The packages they are offered will be the same as all other Territory public servants enjoy and therefore will represent a significant reduction for Hong Kong recruits in strict remuneration terms. Despite this, their standard of living in Australia will be far higher than it is in Hong Kong. Hong Kong residents pay between 40% and 60% of their wages on housing and even that generally pays only for a small high-rise apartment, often without a kitchen. Their chances of ever owning their own home, let alone a suburban home with a yard, are very limited indeed. In the Northern Territory, the average person pays 21.4% of his or her wage on a home mortgage. It is the second lowest rate in Australia and is still 13% below the national average. Education in the Territory is much cheaper as is car registration and many other daily cost of living expenses. Generally the people of Hong Kong see the Northern Territory as a land of improved lifestyle and opportunity, not only for themselves but also for their children.

If, as a government, we had had any doubt about how attractive the Territory would be to the people of Hong Kong, our fears were allayed after we placed our first and only advertisement in the South China Morning Post. Some 2000 Hong Kong people answered that one solitary advertisement. Once the Public Service Commissioner overcame his initial shock, and I know that he was taken aback by the response to that first ad, a team from the department began to short-list the applicants. Of the original 2000, 150 were short-listed for interview. In answer to some of those people who thought going to Hong Kong would be some sort of a jaunt, I can assure them that it is no jaunt to interview 150 people in 12 days. It is certainly no holiday.

All of the people short-listed for the interview process were professionals working in the occupations most greatly needed in the Northern Territory. There were architects, computer programmers, analysts and engineers, pharmacists, doctors, lawyers, financiers, accountants, economists and medical specialists. During the interview process, it was discovered that not only were the interviewees specialists in their fields but, in many cases, the spouses of the interviewees were also professional people in those areas which are very hard to recruit to, and they were interviewed as well.

Mr Speaker, of the 150 people interviewed in Hong Kong, a substantial majority were suitable for employment in the Northern Territory. Their professional skills are extremely high, and a vast majority of those interviewed also had postgraduate qualifications. For example, many of the doctors had moved on to specialise in particular fields, such as paediatrics. Most of the engineers had gained postgraduate qualifications and are members of the Institute of Engineers in Australia, and many of the pharmacists' qualifications are recognised in this country as well. Most of these postgraduate qualifications have been gained in the United Kingdom or the United States, but a significant number of those people interviewed had studied in Australia.

I have heard some members opposite try to play down the enormous advantages of this recruitment exercise. I could not have expected anything else from an opposition which constantly knocks anything constructive that is done by the government. One of their criticisms has been that people who move to the Northern Territory from Hong Kong will simply use the Territory as a stepping stone to the rest of Australia. That may well be so, but there is little that can be done about it if, in fact, they choose to do that. We can set a minimum contract period for each worker brought here from Hong Kong and, in this case, that period will be 3 years. Before the Northern Territory government will sponsor any person for immigration to Australia, he or she will have to sign a 3-year contract. Of course, those people will be subject to a normal probationary period, as are all public servants. However, our selection process is so thorough that I am sure that our Hong Kong recruits will measure up.

Our decision to seek qualified, professional employees from Hong Kong has not been made without support. We are currently in the process of finalising a tripartite agreement between the Northern Territory government, the federal government and the ACTU to ensure the smooth entry of Hong Kong recruits to Australia. The ACTU, acting through the Northern Territory Trades and Labor Council, has agreed to support this as a one-off exercise, and this government agrees that this should be a solution to a short-term problem only.

Later during these sittings, I hope to be able to outline to members some of the initiatives this government plans to take in relation to recruitment and retention and also in relation to the development of our staff generally. These initiatives will allow us to develop a strong local work force and considerably reduce the need to seek outside employees. Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that the Territory government's expos in Hong Kong and Shenzhen have been enormously successful. From the point of view of my portfolio responsibilities, the Hong Kong Expo, in particular, has been outstanding in its returns to the Territory. Not only will we receive the direct benefits of the skills of very highly-qualified professional people as a result of this recruitment drive, but our Territory will be enriched by the culture and enthusiasm these people will bring with them.



In closing, I would like to offer my personal congratulations and thanks to all those officers of the Northern Territory Public Service who worked so hard to bring the benefits home to us all, and I cannot let this opportunity go by without also offering those thanks to the Minister for Industries and Development who, through his efforts, brought together the expos in Hong Kong and Shenzhen and who has created through that effort a great opportunity for the Territory to improve its lifestyle and future. As I said, we will all benefit from the untiring efforts of a few people, and I commend the statement to the House.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to this statement today, I would like to say at the outset that I support and congratulate the government for taking the initiative in going to Hong Kong and Shenzhen in China with the trade expo. I believe that, when things are as desperate economically as they are, not only in the Northern Territory but elsewhere in Australia, desperate measures are needed. I believe that this was a desperate measure which cost a great deal of money and much time and effort, but I believe that, as a community, we will reap the rewards of the government's initiative.

However, Mr Speaker, I come to a big but. I believe that, whilst it should always be looking ahead, the government needs also to look behind at times. When the honourable ministers went overseas, with their retinues of senior public servants and others, I believe they left behind many people whom they have forgotten about. I refer to the small business people. I have no wish to knock big business and big developers who come to the Northern Territory to invest money and provide jobs. We need those in the Northern Territory, but we need also a sensible government which looks at the small business people and is mindful of their situation. During the time of one of the previous Chief Ministers, we heard a great deal about the government cutting red tape and regulations and reducing the bureaucratic strangling actions of many government departments. I have yet to see the success of the initiatives put in place by the previous Chief Minister in this regard.

I am referring to small business people and, time and time again, they have brought to my attention the problems they experience in getting started. They have everything invested in the Northern Territory. Not only have they invested their money, they have invested their family and everything they have in the Northern Territory. When things go a little bad for them, they cannot simply pick up sticks and leave because they have invested everything here. I think that it would do the government good to look at the circumstances of such people. They do not want hand-outs; they merely want a fair go. I have spoken of this before and I thought that, somewhere along the line, the plight of small business might have sunk into the government's consciousness. The government will say that it has a Department of Industries and Development to help small business people to manage their own affairs and that it has initiatives in place to assist the tradesman who becomes a manager of a business and needs help in relation to management, banking, ordering etc. That is true. However, I think that, perhaps through the Department of Industries and Development, the government has to do a little more lateral thinking and not, for example, be satisfied with the little help that it is offering small business people. It should consider what it can do further to make it easier for people when they set up their business.

As soon as people set up in business in the Northern Territory, they are behind the 8-ball immediately because they have to pay more for their electricity and water. As well, they have ridiculous restrictions placed on them, in many instances by the Planning Authority. I will not go into that

now because I have spoken about it before. Legislation will be debated during these sittings in relation to parking spaces attached to big developments. We have ridiculous situations whereby small businesses are required by the Planning Authority to provide enormous parking areas. They are not encouraged by our government at all.

This morning, when the Leader of the Opposition was speaking, an interjection was made about creating a Hong Kong in Australia. Perhaps only in jest or perhaps half seriously, there was some talk about certain big developers from Hong Kong buying an island off the coast of Australia, setting up business there and creating a second Hong Kong. Personally, I do not want to see a Hong Kong created in the Northern Territory and I do not think anybody else in the Northern Territory would want to see a Hong Kong created here. As a community, we do not want to see things change. If we wanted to live as the people in Hong Kong do, we would not be here. We would be in Hong Kong or in a big city elsewhere in Australia.

We have not only to consider the development that will follow from the government's initiatives in staging these expos, through the flow of increased finances to the Northern Territory and the jobs that will be created, which are good things, but we have to consider also the impact of great numbers of people coming to the Northern Territory from other places. History shows that, if people migrate in great numbers from one country to settle in another country, which has different community standards, different social habits, different racial composition and different everything else, problems will inevitably arise.

Mr Coulter: 10% of our population is Chinese.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, the honourable minister says that 10% of our population is Chinese. I like the Chinese people. I do not like using the word 'multiculturalism', but it describes the situation in Darwin. Although the honourable minister says that 10% of our population is Chinese, those people would consider themselves to be Australians rather than Chinese.

Mr Coulter: I merely wanted to make sure that you were aware of it.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am very much aware of it. Those people are Australian, not Chinese.

If a large group of people comes to Australia from another country, we will have social problems which will take generations to get rid of. As an example, I could cite the terrible racial problem which occurred in England after the troubles in Kenya, when vast numbers of Kenyans and Indians holding British passports migrated to England. One could not really blame them but, because of the great number of people involved, grave racial unrest erupted. I do not believe that the situation in the large English cities has been the same since. Of course, people have to live somewhere. It was very unfortunate that those people had to leave the country of their birth, where they had lived for their entire lives until that time. However, in a situation like this, where we are encouraging people to move to Australia, we have to consider the social consequences which will occur in the future.

It would be remiss of me not to take up a few of the points made by the Leader of the Opposition this morning. I have to be fair about this and I have to agree with government members that the Leader of the Opposition was denigrating certain manufacturing establishments in the Trade Development Zone. I do not think it matters one iota what activity a business is involved

in, provided that it is successful. It does not matter whether a business is manufacturing condoms, Christmas trees, candles or whatever. If the business sets up a successful operation in the Trade Development Zone, good luck to it. If firms are coming in from elsewhere to set up operations in the Trade Development Zone, that is a feather in the government's cap, provided that it has learnt from past mistakes in relation to certain unsuccessful ventures in the zone. One has to applaud the creation of extra jobs if these are of benefit and can be filled by local people. I would like to think that, when artisans and other workers come from Hong Kong and other countries to work in the factories in the Trade Development Zone, not only will they work there happily with their Australian counterparts, but also they will impart some of their knowledge and skills to their Australian coworkers.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that working conditions for Australians and overseas workers in the Trade Development Zone have to be similar to those pertaining in the rest of the work force in Australia. I am not speaking in support of union-oriented labour at all. It is just a matter of common sense that the wages and salaries offered to workers in the zone should be comparable to those offered for similar work elsewhere in the Northern Territory and Australia.

I turn now to the question of professional people coming from Hong Kong and other countries to practise their professions in the Northern Territory. Like other thinking people, I would like to be assured that professional qualifications will be a matter of serious concern to the government. We must never lower our standards of professional expertise in any case in which professional people come here from overseas. I do not believe that this has happened to a large extent, but I know that it has happened in some instances. I can speak from personal knowledge of incidents in which veterinarians from overseas have not been as skilled as locally trained veterinarians. I can speak also from personal knowledge of some doctors who have come from overseas to work in Australia and whose expertise, I believe, is not as great as that of their Australian counterparts. I believe that, before these professional people can set up in business here, the appropriate registration body must be assured, either through production of qualifications ...

Mr McCarthy: It happens automatically, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I have known of instances in which it has not happened.

Mr McCarthy: Yes, but this is different. We have people migrating to the country. That has nothing to do with our offering them a job. If we offer a job, we will make sure they have their ...

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Whether they migrate here or whether they are offered jobs here, the same rule applies. The community as a whole has to be assured that the professional qualifications ...

Mr Coulter: How did you get here?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I have been here longer than you!

Mr Coulter: So what? I am not asking you how long. How did you get here?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: My professional qualifications are better than yours, so pipe down.

Mr Coulter: You know all about ducks, goats and pregnant cats.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Some honourable members seem to be a bit deaf or cloth-eared. The professional qualifications of people coming from overseas have to be the same as those of people trained in Australia.

Mr Manzie: That is right.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You do not have any argument with me.

Mr Manzie: No, I don't. We agree.

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: As I said, I have been here longer than you have, and my professional qualifications would stand up to inspection against yours any day, honourable mate.

Mr Speaker, I would like to think that the government will continue with its initiatives in seeking new development for the Northern Territory but, at the same time, that it will not forget the small business people who have invested everything here, many of whom are struggling to exist these days.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, before I speak about my part in the Hong Kong expo, I would like to touch on a few comments made by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Koolpinyah. I found it rather surprising that the Leader of the Opposition should embark on what was almost a campaign against what would be regarded traditionally as the interests of the working class which purportedly has been represented by members opposite over the years. The Leader of the Opposition commented on people presently working in the Trade Development Zone and prospective employees. He spoke about their wages and the class of work that they undertake in a manner which could only be described as belittling. I wonder what those people will think about the philosophy of the ALP and where it is going in its attitude to people who work in the Northern Territory.

I agree with the member for Koolpinyah that it does not matter a tinker's cuss what people do. People have the opportunity to choose their employment and, in the main, they pursue what they are doing to the best of their ability. If they are in the zone making toothpaste or whatever, they are playing their part. They are employed and are carrying their weight in society. It behoves the Leader of the Opposition to give those people the credit that is due to them rather than criticise them.

The opposition seems to have overlooked completely the fact that the commitment to the Territory of these operations is very great and very broad. The Chief Minister indicated the wide effect that this has on the business community in Darwin in terms of the purchase of business machines and equipment, homes, furniture, consumables, cars, education and, indeed, scissors. No doubt, a pair of scissors has been bought by someone. The opposition has no perception of development or the ability to stimulate economic growth in the Northern Territory. We hear continual criticism and rhetoric from members opposite and that extends to rumour and innuendo in relation to what this government has done and, in some cases, what private enterprise has done to develop the Northern Territory. However, they never tell us just what they would do. They are bereft of ideas and have no perception of the future.

The Leader of the Opposition has given no indication of how a Labor government would prepare development plans for the Northern Territory. Indeed, the Leader of the Opposition has been the only speaker from the opposition in this debate. I hope that we will hear from the member for Stuart, the shadow spokesman for primary industry. Industry people want to hear from the honourable opposition spokesman on primary industry. They want to know how the opposition would develop markets for Northern Territory produce. We have heard nothing from the members opposite in relation to what they would do in the unfortunate event that they ever won government in the Northern Territory.

The member for Koolpinyah touched on the benefits that might result for small business. I would have thought that the benefits for small business would be in the increased economic activity which derives from the development of the zone. People involved in every kind of small business activity would experience some benefit from the economic activity generated by the zone.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I will believe you if you show it to me on paper.

Mr REED: That is experienced right across the business community of the Northern Territory, particularly in Darwin. We should all encourage continued growth of the Trade Development Zone. It is pleasing at least to note that the opposition has finally started to support the zone after all the criticism that it has thrown at it over the years. Now that it is a goer, it is finally starting to support it.

This was my first visit to Hong Kong and I spent 3½ days there on expo activities. The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries had a stand at expo which was manned by 2 officers, Christine Knight and Guy Nichols. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them on the effort that they put in. From my observation of what they were doing, it certainly was no junket. They were pretty tired by the end of it and I think that applies to all the people who went to the expo, including the private business people. It was a fairly taxing exercise. They all represented the Territory in a very professional and successful way of which we can all be proud.

On my first day in Hong Kong, I met with the people at Austrade and the Acting Senior Trade Commissioner, Mr Peter Deacon. That was really to obtain some awareness from someone who had some local knowledge of the business picture in Hong Kong and the trade opportunities there. I thought it would be useful to tap into that, given that it was my first visit. One of the things that struck me was the awareness of the Northern Territory, not only in Hong Kong but in a number of other centres in South-east Asia. Certainly, the Northern Territory has a very high profile and the activities that have been undertaken in the past have been very rewarding. As a result of those activities, we have been able to develop a very high profile in South-east Asia and a great awareness of what the Northern Territory has to offer.

In Hong Kong, I visited vegetable, fruit and fish markets with the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. Principally, our aim was to gain an appreciation of the marketing structure for fish, vegetable and fruit products in Hong Kong, and to note how our products fared there and what the market requirements were. One thing that struck me in relation to the fruit market that we visited was that Australia has to look very closely at its packaging and presentation of product. I did not think that, as a country, we presented our product very well. There were products on display from southern Australia. Unfortunately, poorly-presented products from anywhere in Australia reflect on all producers and suppliers to the

market. When our products are on display side by side with well-presented and well-packaged products from places such as the United States and other major supplying countries, it does not reflect well on our products. Fortunately, comments in relation to Territory produce were very supportive. McGowan Produce from Darwin has pioneered Territory entry into markets in Hong Kong to a great extent. That has been well received. Fortunately, McGowan Produce ensures that it provides a consistent supply of high-quality products. That is the key both to getting into the market and to being able to stay there. If we are able to continue with that type of supply and consistency, our markets will continue to grow.

The fish markets were handling principally product that was caught in the South China Sea. There is not much of an opportunity for the Territory product to find a niche in that market, but there is certainly an opportunity in Hong Kong for some seafood products. Mud crabs are a classic example. The mud crabs that were taken over there, carefully cared for and well-presented, were extremely well received. They created considerable interest and generated many inquiries. Definitely, there is considerable potential there for expansion in that market. Crab is highly sought in the restaurant and hotel trades and certainly the quality of the Northern Territory product that was put forward for people to try was well received and there are some indications of opportunities there to find a niche in that market. As I say, several inquiries were received about the possibility of commercial seafood imports, and these are being followed through.

Another opportunity in relation to seafood is aquaculture. For some time, a group of business people has been seeking an opportunity to establish an aquaculture facility in Darwin. Those people have gone to the extent of looking at the availability of land and I am confident that the discussions that were undertaken in Hong Kong in relation to this and the follow-up action that has taken place will lead to an opportunity for the establishment of that facility here. It is important to note that not only are there Hong Kong people involved in that but, in fact, Territorians as well. As the Minister for Industries and Development indicated, some of these projects will not fall into place in the next few weeks but, hopefully, over the next year or so, we may see some of them develop. It is that sort of vision and activity that we need to put in place to ensure that those initiatives are followed through so that we may reap some benefit from those opportunities.

A seafood wholesaler from Darwin, Mr Mick Burns, travelled to Hong Kong and took part in the expo. He made some very useful contacts at the commercial seafood seminar. Again, that is another illustration of the opportunities that are available. Probably I would class Mr Burns as what the member for Koolpinyah referred to as a small businessman. He is a classic example of a person who has the initiative and drive to get up and do the job himself, and that is what it is all about.

On one occasion, I hosted a Northern Territory produce-tasting function. The produce included prawns, mangoes and melons, and I think there was mud crab as well. That was attended by some very influential business people and also a manager of a country club which had 6000 members. Clubs and groups of that nature indicated a real interest in our recreational fishing activities. The recreational fishing video that was produced by the department and shown continuously at the expo attracted a great deal of attention. It was very popular. A Cantonese version was produced and a number of copies were distributed. As a result of that video, which has generated so much interest, it is known that at least one Hong Kong travel agent is preparing packages for recreational fishing trips to the Northern Territory. That is another

illustration of the benefits that we will derive from the Hong Kong expo. No doubt, there will be other opportunities in respect of organisations such as country clubs and the like.

To get back to horticulture, one type of mango that was taken to Hong Kong was of the Irwin variety. This received very high acceptance among the people of Hong Kong. There are fairly substantial plantings of it in the Northern Territory, and 3 importers have expressed interest in importing the Irwin variety mango, and that includes a large food chain. If we can manage to establish access to markets of that nature in a place like Hong Kong, that will provide a big boost to our Northern Territory producers. Great interest was expressed in some of the tropical fruits, particularly sapodilla and carambola, and no doubt the department and some of the local business people and agents who were there will pursue those opportunities.

Mr Speaker, all in all, I thought that the Hong Kong expo was extremely successful ...

Mr Ede: It wasn't from your point of view.

Mr REED: You were not listening.

Mr Ede: You did nothing.

Mr REED: You would not know. I have illustrated in the last few minutes 2 or 3 instances where the Northern Territory will benefit.

Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart is a classic example of what I was speaking about earlier. Honourable members opposite have no vision for the future. They would sit at home and not make any contact with prospective markets. They have no vision at all, no perception of what is required to take up market opportunities for the Northern Territory, and that is the fate that would face the primary industry sector in the Northern Territory if the member for Stuart were to become the minister. He is very good at promoting blue cows, polka dot cows and all manner of other outrageous things but, when it comes to being positive and gaining an understanding of what the market requires and how the markets in other countries operate so that we can adjust to their needs, he is not interested.

There were real opportunities at the Hong Kong expo. In the coming months and years, these will come to fruition and I have no doubt that, as a whole, the expo was a very great success. In closing, I would like again to commend the efforts of officers of my department, Christine Knight and Guy Nichols, and indeed all the other people who travelled from the Northern Territory to take part in the expo. They did a magnificent job. They certainly did the Northern Territory proud and they each deserve praise from all members of this House.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, first, I believe that I need to make a couple of points relating to my attitude to the overall structure of the Trade Development Zone. I have read a report, which I am sure the government would have, by Mr Robbins of the Graduate School of Management of the University of Adelaide who undertook in-depth studies with people overseas. The report indicates one positive and a number of negative factors that dominate people's judgment. The negative factors include the absence of frequent, direct freight services, the high cost of freight services, the absence of local support services and subcontracting capacity, perceived weaknesses in Darwin's communications, including domestic freight services and passenger flight

schedules, and other factors such as fear of strikes, high taxes and the absence of opportunity to make capital gains.

The only positive indicated is the ability to offer Australian-made status. That works in with particular textiles and knitwear products where the quota system allows people a competitive edge to import partly-made units and re-export them to other countries. That is fair enough. It gives us an edge in that regard. However, it is not a factor that we can be certain will last. There is a general movement around the world to reduce those limitations on import/export and I am not sure whether that edge will remain with us.

The other factors indicated as negative in the eyes of potential operators in the Trade Development Zone are not negative factors simply for the Trade Development Zone. They are matters that need to be addressed in terms of our total development thrust in the Northern Territory. We must come to grips with the problems associated with freight services and the encouragement of our local support services to market more effectively their ability to provide services to people overseas. These people come from a culture where they are constantly besieged by numbers of small subcontractors from whom they can choose. It must be made clear to them that they could obtain the same results in the Northern Territory even though they would be working in a different business culture.

I have made the point consistently that the future of the Northern Territory's development thrust lies with taking what we know to be natural advantages and the things that we can do and doing them better, more effectively and more efficiently, with higher value added.

Mr Coulter: You are so funny.

Mr EDE: The Leader of Government Business is interjecting, Mr Speaker. I know that I sound like a broken record on this subject. I have been saying this ever since I became a member of this Assembly.

The problem is that, to an extent, some of the development in the Trade Development Zone is in effect a blind alley because the point ...

Mr Coulter: Oh, you want to kick them out?

Mr EDE: Rubbish, Mr Speaker! I am not saying that the minister should kick them out. That is up to him. What I am saying is that, if you put all your efforts into developing up an area which is not one where you have a market niche that responds to that natural advantage, you are diverting your thrust from other areas where natural advantages exist, which are the areas where a better return could be obtained. Some of the areas have been spoken about time and time again. For example, I have talked about the need to process all the products of the beef industry. Certainly, some work has been done on these areas, but much more needs to be done and to be done quickly. What an industry we have destroyed in respect of buffalo hides! The meatworks at Point Stuart, which used to turn over millions of dollars every year, was sold for scrap the other day at a price of \$400 000. That is all that is left of that enterprise after the incredible damage that the government has done to that industry.

Mr Hatton: The federal government ...



Mr EDE: What absolute rubbish! Haven't you been listening all these years?

Mr Coulter: From where did Point Stuart get all its buffalo?

Mr EDE: Okay, tell your minister to make a statement and we will debate that one. This mob has been shooting from helicopters for the last year. Haven't you noticed?

Mr Hatton: Under federal instructions.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, it was not done under federal instructions. Get it right.

Mr Speaker, tropical fruits is an exciting area, but all we heard from the honourable minister was that he had found one variety of mango that was pretty popular overseas. I believe that his contribution to the debate was the worst so far. It was most unfortunate that he sounded like a first time tourist who had taken the market tour of Hong Kong. It is a pretty popular tour. He knocked South Australia and the way its people are presenting its goods there. I have a little tip for him. He should look at how Western Australia is marketing its produce. It is developing an excellent reputation for consistency in quality of a wide variety of vegetables that it is marketing over there. The minister mentioned quality of product, consistency, presentation and supply. That was the type of information that he could have gained in a telephone briefing from anyone in Austrade instead of spending a week in Hong Kong.

He talked about crabs. I went to the Hong Kong market for the first time 18 years ago and there was talk at that stage about exporting mud crabs from Papua New Guinea and northern Australia. It has not progressed very far if the honourable minister has only now rediscovered the whole idea. On the one hand, he talked about there being no opportunity for our seafood in that market and then he spoke about the wholesale seafood market there. He is right that there are many opportunities there. It is very obvious, however, that he failed to grasp what they are. He did not indicate anything that he actually achieved from his visit. On the whole, his contribution was pathetic and he certainly did not earn his crust while he was overseas.

In respect of workers and prospective employers in the Trade Development Zone - and let us lay this to rest - if we were in government, we would not want to prop up uneconomic industries if they started to collapse. What we want are workers employed on terms and conditions which will enable them to enjoy the same standard of living as all Territorians. That is what we are after and that is where we will be putting our economic thrust.

The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government spoke about the problem of recruitment. It certainly is a problem. I have no difficulty with his recruiting overseas as long as the terms and conditions are equivalent to what our own public servants receive. However, he did not clarify the problems with immigration. I would like to have heard a little more about that. We heard the Minister for Education talk about people coming over on a 3-year contract and then returning. I presume that they would be on temporary visas of some nature. However, the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government said that his recruits would be on 3-year contracts, and he presumed that some of them would then move on to other parts of Australia. I have no problem with that as long as those contracts are such that we are able to obtain that 3 years of work from them. He did not mention whether they would have air fares.

Mr McCarthy: Normal relocation.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, in relation to relocation expenses, it is obviously very expensive to move a person, his family and their furniture.

Mr McCarthy: It is cheaper from Hong Kong. There is a direct shipping service.

Mr EDE: I hope that he will be able to advise on comparable costs into Alice Springs of people from Hong Kong as against people from elsewhere.

Mr Coulter: It is cheaper from Hong Kong. Did you hear him?

Mr EDE: Are you saying it is cheaper to relocate from Hong Kong to Alice Springs than it is to relocate by rail from Adelaide to Alice Springs?

Mr McCarthy: The majority will come to Darwin.

Mr EDE: No, come on.

Members interjecting.

Mr Coulter: What a childish fool you are!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will withdraw the remark.

Mr COULTER: I withdraw the remark, Mr Speaker.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, obviously recruitment from overseas is necessary only if we are unable to attract people from within Australia. It is, however, a second best option. Obviously, we would prefer to be able to recruit people with the same skills from within Australia. Given the problems with immigration and with people moving on, there is always the danger that we will not hold these people beyond the 3-year period. If, by changing the nature of the mix in the contracts of employment and by acknowledging the fact that it will cost more to bring people to Alice Springs, it is possible to provide other terms and conditions to attract people from down south and to hold them in the Territory, that should be looked at too.

In relation to teachers, the problem lies not so much with the ability to recruit them to the Northern Territory as with the ability to hold them. That is the problem that we have with public servants and with teachers. It is as a result of this government's policies that we are unable to hold our teachers or our public servants. We could reduce very substantially our recruitment costs and the problems that we have in maintaining services in the Northern Territory if we were able to hold the bulk of our public servants and our teachers for a reasonable period. As a direct result of this government's diminution of the terms and conditions of teachers in particular, half the members of the teaching staff in Nhulunbuy, for example, are saying either that they will resign or ...

Mr Coulter: The local member is saying that he will resign. What are you worried about the teachers for?

Mr EDE: With brains like that on the government benches, Mr Speaker, is it any wonder that we have problems?

If, after his best efforts to provide adequate terms and conditions, the minister is still unable to recruit and retain the necessary staff, overseas recruitment is a viable option that must be explored. I have no problem with that, provided the terms and conditions are the same as for people within our own structures.

However, training must be the answer. As I said in the budget debate, I cannot see why the government, in conjunction with another university or on its own behalf, has not moved to offer the Diploma of Education externally so that people throughout the Northern Territory outside of Darwin are able to extend their qualifications and move into those areas in which we have the greatest need of teachers: mathematics, the sciences and computer studies. If the minister were doing that, if he were offering adequate terms and conditions of employment for teachers in rural areas, if he were not continuing to meddle with the service and to destroy the morale of teachers in our schools and still he was having difficulties, I could see why he would have to recruit overseas. However, the problem is that he has not done that. He is going overseas without rectifying the problems in his own backyard. That is most unfortunate.

In respect of his attack on Col Young and the suggestion that Col Young made racist remarks in relation to problems with people coming from overseas, there is absolutely no doubt that cultural shock will be experienced by people coming here, just as it is by people who go into Aboriginal communities or to Indonesia. That is something that we have to accept. It is something that the honourable minister will have to take on board when he brings people here. He will have to provide induction courses to enable them to ...

Mr Coulter: We got you from overseas, as I recall.

Mr EDE: Yes, you were there too.

Mr Coulter: It does not matter. Don't knock everybody else. I am not knocking them. You are. You came from overseas.

Mr EDE: I would have thought that, from your sojourn overseas, you would have learned at least a bit more than you are demonstrating that you know at the moment.

Mr Coulter: Don't keep knocking the people from overseas. You are the only example that I am against.

Mr EDE: I do not know whether you are a wit or witless, but I have some ideas.

Mr Speaker, as far as attracting students is concerned, that is excellent. I have no problem with that. If we are able to develop boarding facilities for children to attend government schools in the Northern Territory, we may be able to address the decline that we have currently in the school population. Certainly, the numbers are falling and that is making it less economic to provide the same standard of education for those students who have remained in the Territory. The schools would become much more economic as units and we would be able to provide a wider base of services if they were topped up with students from overseas. Certainly, if overseas students studied in our government school system, used our boarding facilities, and then proceeded to our university, our TAFE colleges or our postgraduate colleges, it would make those institutions operate more economically. That is commendable and members on this side of the House approve of it.

The Minister for Education did not address the question of immigration problems. I presume that he is aware of the problems which arose after the Tiananmen Square riots and the later troubles that occurred in Shanghai, where the Australian Consulate was mobbed by students seeking entry to Australia. Whilst that certainly demonstrates that there is a demand for Australian education, it also demonstrates to me that there are possibly some problems at the federal level in terms of visas for such students. I am not aware of the details of that problem, but I had hoped that the honourable minister would be.

All in all, however, I thought that the contribution from the Minister for Education was fair and reasonable. When the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government stopped slanging, his points concerning the recruitment of staff were not too bad. It is most unfortunate that the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries contributed nothing to the debate. He demonstrated merely that he had taken his first tour overseas and had learned nothing. It was an absolute waste of time.

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, if you are giving points for contributions to this debate, the last contribution would have to be the most pathetic of all time. I cannot believe what I have heard in this debate from a political party which claims to represent the working class. It seems to be becoming very fussy indeed about which workers it will represent. We have heard the Leader of the Opposition suggest that people who make candles or work in the textile or leather industries are not welcome. He does not realise that, in order to have an average, some people have to be below the average figure.

Mr Speaker, let us have absolutely no doubt where the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition stand in relation to the Trade Development Zone. Hansard is full of examples. A cursory glance at the record from November 1986 to February 1989 shows that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke no less than 9 times on the Trade Development Zone by means of contributions to motions, matters of public importance, adjournment debates or the asking of questions. In the same period, the Leader of the Opposition spoke 38 times, including questions, motions, debates on ministerial statements and adjournment debates. One does not have to be a genius to work out what they said on each of the 50-odd occasions when they spoke during the period when the Trade Development Zone was being established. While we were trying to promote it, they bagged it and canned it. The newspapers were full of their comments about what they would do: shut it down, get out of it, give it 2 years! The headlines were there for everybody to read.

Today, the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy are trying to claim a little of the glory. However, they miss out. They miss out on some vital ingredients that are required in the development of any region - faith, commitment, vision and courage. They lack all 4 of those basic ingredients which are required to get a project like the Trade Development Zone up and running. They are also needed in relation to initiatives such as Yulara, the gas pipeline, the railway and the petrochemical industry which, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, I said we would get. That we will get it is as certain as it is that it will become dark tonight. It is a year closer to happening than when I first spoke about it last year. It will happen.

Mr Deputy Speaker, life is for the living. Unfortunately, the deadheads opposite would not be able to enjoy that vital part of being on this earth.

Mr Collins: Would you like to clarify which part of vital...

Mr COULTER: I am sorry. I am talking about the deadheads of the Australian Labor Party, Mr Speaker. They are the ones whom I am talking about - the deadheads whom I have described today as clowns and childish fools.

I thank honourable members for their contributions to this debate on a critically important issue. We have been talking about no less than the future economic direction of the Northern Territory and the important links with Asia which are now being forged. I was not aware that it was a debate about working conditions in textile factories at the Darwin Trade Development Zone, although this is what the Leader of the Opposition seemed to think it was. I found his contribution astonishing. His views sum up all that is wrong with the Australian economy today. Just this week, the Macquarie Bank warned that Australia's foreign debt would double to more than \$200 000m within 5 years. Among measures to be taken to avoid that horrific scenario is productive expansion of Australia's manufacturing sector and a willingness for Australians to redouble export manufacturing efforts.

However, the Leader of the Opposition talks about manufacturing jobs not being good enough for Territory or Australian workers. He talks about the need for jobs for Territorians with tertiary education qualifications. He talks about jobs being held by Territorians at the TDZ as inferior and unworthy. According to him, the jobs are fit only for Asian workers. Decent Australians, according to him, would not want such jobs. In any case, he warns us, automatically they would become constituents of the Australian Labor Party. That is what he said. I would like to see those people voting for him after we let them know what he thinks of them. I have news for the Leader of the Opposition. A great many workers in the new textile factories in the zone cherish their jobs. They like doing what they are doing. They do not want to go to university and they most definitely will not be happy about being described virtually as poor white trash by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition made some other amazing statements. One was that I neglected the needs of existing Territory small business in my report on the success of the expos. What does he think the whole exercise was about? It was all about bringing new investment and new business to the Territory so that our economy will grow and flourish. That will create more benefits for existing small business than for any other sector. According to a recent independent study commissioned by the Trade Development Zone, every new job created in the zone adds 2 to 3 jobs outside the zone. New workers attracted to the zone spend money. They live in houses. They send their children to school. They eat and drink. They consume as much as do all other consumers. Local construction firms build the new factories. More trucks are required for the transportation of goods. Electricians and plumbers fit out the factories. Legal firms handle more business. Even the union gets bigger.

The Leader of the Opposition suggests that there are 2 economies in the Territory, 1 inside the zone and the other outside it. The Chief Minister touched on that. It is hogwash and the Leader of the Opposition must surely know that. He says also that foreign companies are coming into the zone without any knowledge of Australian unions and Australian work practices. I can assure him that he is sadly astray in his belief. The companies are fully briefed on Australian awards and union conditions. The matter is one of their more serious concerns. It is supremely ironic that some of these concerns have been expressed to me by a representative of the People's Republic of China. The Chinese know all about Australian unions and their representatives in the Territory. They shake their heads in amazement.

It is also interesting that the Leader of the Opposition's views about sweatshop working conditions at the zone are not shared by the Commonwealth government or the ACTU, which prefer to take the wider and more positive view about the potential for manufacturing growth in Darwin. I point out that, in respect of some of the menial tasks which the Leader of the Opposition so readily denigrates, we have rehabilitated people from Tasmania, where the textile industry was collapsing and factories were closing down. We provided them with job opportunities in their chosen trade and field of expertise here in the Territory. Does he mock them also, Mr Speaker? How outrageous!

The Leader of the Opposition says that we do not want a Hong Kong in Darwin. He says that we do not want a high-rise metropolitan jungle here. He misses the point about Hong Kong and Chinese interests in Darwin and the Trade Development Zone. They do not want it either. One of their biggest problems is finding factory space on the ground where they can be more efficient and economical. They do not want to sit in their cars in traffic jams for 6 hours a day either. They are interested in Darwin and the Territory because we have land, space and a record of establishing efficiently-run factories in the zone. That is why they are here. The Hong Kong and Shenzhen experience is that factories become massively inefficient through vertical construction and widely separated locations. The ability to integrate factories with plenty of room on 1 level in 1 manufacturing zone is one of our best assets.

The Leader of the Opposition pours scorn on textile factories as being somewhat undesirable and third-world. He says that we should broaden our range with fashionable high-tech factories producing electronic components. I wonder if he has ever been into an electronic component factory and seen the working conditions there. It does not matter whether workers use a screwdriver or a needle to carry out their work. The fact is that the most sophisticated, highly-computerised knitting machines that the world has to offer are now being placed in the zone. The honourable member does not know what he is talking about, and that is nothing new to us. The production of electronic components is not high-tech industry. It is production-line factory work, with no greater or lesser status than has textile industry work. However, the zone will be attracting some new factories shortly which might meet the Leader of the Opposition's obviously high standards. For example, there is a precision engineering firm and, a little further down the track, possibly a computer manufacturer. The precision engineering factory should be up and running in the zone within the next 3 to 6 months. Meanwhile, the 'poor white trash' that he refers to will have to resign themselves to their inferior and unwanted jobs at the zone and we on the government side must somehow feel guilty that we have helped create those jobs for them.

The Leader of the Opposition shot himself in the foot today. Perhaps he would like to doorknock his electorate this weekend and tell his constituents that they are inferior because they do not have tertiary education qualifications and that they really ought to brush themselves up if they are employed as anything less than biochemists. Today, the Leader of the Opposition has shown himself to be totally out of touch with the Australian and Territory economies, conditions and aspirations at the Darwin Trade Development Zone, and the policies and membership of his own political party. I have always thought the Country Liberal Party truly represented workers in the Territory, and the Leader of the Opposition has confirmed this for me today.

In closing, let us not forget that most of us came from elsewhere to this Territory. As I look around the Chamber, I do not see many people who were born here. The only Territory born people here at the moment are the member

for Karama, the member for Fannie Bay and a member of my staff. The rest of us all came from somewhere else.

A member: I was here in 1940.

Mr COULTER: You were not born here. Even though you have been here for a long time, Mr Speaker, you too came from elsewhere. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition knocks overseas people, yet he came here from overseas. In 1978, there were 20 000 people in the Territory on 2-year contracts and that work force used to turn over at Christmas time. Nevertheless, he is worried about turnover of the 3-year contract staff that we are talking about now. The member for Koolpinyah came here from somewhere else. Was the member for Barkly born here? I think that he came from Western Australia. I might stand to be corrected on that, but most of us came from somewhere else. Why did we come here? We came because we believed that the Territory was a land of opportunities ...

Mr Bell: What about the member for Arafura and the member for Arnhem?

Mr COULTER: They were not here, and are still not now. In fact, I cannot remember if they were here at question time. They certainly did not ask a question. We were talking about people who were here during the course of this debate. They have not been here during the course of this debate at all.

Mr Bell: Or any members of your staff.

A member: Yes they were.

Mr Bell: They did not contribute.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, the facts are ...

Mr Bell: What are you on about, Barry? Sit down.

Mr COULTER: They were in the Legislative Assembly at the time. Do not get pedantic with me. Go along with the point that I am making. Even you came from somewhere else and your children are being educated somewhere else at the moment.

Mr Bell: Because you blokes are doing such a dreadful job of organising it again.

Mr COULTER: That is a strong reflection on the teachers of the Northern Territory. We have it straight from the member for MacDonnell that he has his children interstate because we are doing such a terrible job. What a reflection on the teachers of the Northern Territory. Members opposite cannot help themselves today. It must be their suicide day. Is today hello day when you are supposed to say 'hello' to everybody? Those people opposite have not done anything today at all. They have shot themselves in the foot every time they have opened their mouths today. Territorians have been given a very clear view of where the government stands in relation to development and, in particular, the Trade Development Zone, and what the opposition believes about development and, in particular, the Trade Development Zone. There is a vast difference between the 2 opinions and a void exists in respect of what members of the opposition would do or where they would go. They have not contributed to the debate at all today, and they will not do so in the future. The zone will flourish and develop in spite of them.

I thank all honourable members for their contributions today but, in particular, I thank all the business representatives from the Northern Territory who attended the expos. I thank all the public servants who worked so hard to make it the success that it was. In particular, Mr Speaker, and I single him out and I have left him to last, I thank Ray McHenry, the zone's chairman, who has worked so hard. This did not all happen in Shenzhen overnight. It has taken 3 long, hard years of struggle.

Mr Speaker, I would like to indicate particular appreciation for your efforts in those early days when you were the minister responsible for the Trade Development Zone. We all attended the ceremony when you turned the first sod. You were on the front-end loader. Front-end loaders and bulldozers were in fashion in those days. I commend the efforts that you have made, in particular your assistance resulting from your experience in the colony of Hong Kong. Thanks are due also to the Chief Minister for his role as a previous minister responsible for the zone, and to the former member for Flynn, Ray Hanrahan, who was present in the Assembly today and who was also a minister responsible for the zone. Each and every one of you has contributed to the success of the zone and I would like to place on record today my thanks to you all. The Trade Development Zone has been established as a result of a great deal of hard work by many people, and it has been knocked continuously by members of the opposition and the crossbenches.

A member interjecting.

Mr COULTER: In particular the member for Barkly, if you like. I will single him out.

We will see much more development in the Trade Development Zone. The figures do not lie. It is currently 11 000 m<sup>2</sup>. It will be 23 000 m<sup>2</sup> by June of next year and it will be over 40 000 m<sup>2</sup> by the end of calendar year 1991. That is growth and development, Mr Speaker, and everybody has contributed to that success story.

Motion agreed to.

MARRIED PERSONS (EQUALITY OF STATUS) BILL  
(Serial 227)

Continued from 17 October 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to make some comments on behalf of the opposition in respect of the Married Persons (Equality of Status) Bill. There are a couple of interesting issues that arise from this legislation and which should be drawn to the attention of honourable members. A couple of questions also need to be asked and I hope that will provide some fruitful debate for the Assembly.

As the Attorney-General noted in his second-reading speech, over the last 100 years, there has been significant amendment of the common law position in respect of the legal status of married women. Quite obviously, the capacity of married women that had been so severely limited in bygone ages has been appropriately remedied over time. The provisions of this bill seek to clarify the legal capacity of married women. The bill states, as a principle, that married persons have legal capacity in the same way as if they were not married. There will be no possibility for doubt in the minds of married women in particular that they are able to deal as independent people. Obviously, the opposition supports the government in that regard.



The honourable Attorney-General referred to clause 3(3), and I have a couple of questions that arise from that. Clause 3(3) says that the subclause that I referred to earlier, that indicates the independent legal capacity of a married woman, 'does not apply to, interfere with or render inoperative any restriction on anticipation or alienation attached to the enjoyment of any property by virtue of an instrument executed before the commencement of this act and for that purpose ...'. It talks about, firstly, 'a provision contained in an instrument made in exercise of a special power of appointment shall be deemed to be contained in the instrument in which the power was created' and, secondly, it refers to the will of a testator or testatrix being 'deemed to be an instrument executed on the day of his or her death'.

The gist of that subclause refers to the situation where a parent may will property to offspring and will allow them to deal freely with that property until they are married. However, upon marriage, they would no longer be free to deal with the property. The historical background is that, in the past, some parents have willed property to daughters subject to the condition that, on marriage, they can no longer deal with it. The thought in the parents' mind may be that they want the property to pass on to grandchildren and they do not want the possibility of a son-in-law, for example, wasting the family fortune. That strikes me as being a particularly distrustful attitude. The prospect of willing property to one's children depending on whether you approve or do not approve of the people whom they marry is a prospect that I have not confronted. Let me say that I will not be making inquiries of my in-laws in that regard. I believe that I understand this correctly. The bill purports to prevent parents from willing property to their children on the basis that the property cannot be freely dealt with after such children become married. I ask the Attorney-General whether it is in fact the case that this bill will prevent such conditions being imposed in the testamentary process. I simply note that in passing.

There is a question in relation to whether we should introduce laws that prevent such conditions from applying in wills which have already been made. I note that the honourable Attorney-General has questioned whether or not such provisions should be made retrospective. He states that he is prepared to consider views in that regard. To express a personal view, I have some doubts about that. I really wonder about the extent to which the state ought to interfere in conditions which people place on the bestowal of their property after death. At this stage, I am taking it very much on faith that this bill, in fact, gives effect to that principle and that it will prevent the imposition of such conditions. I would have thought that the mere fact that subclauses 3(1) and 3(2) reinforce the idea of legal capacity for particular people does not necessarily entail the effect to which I have referred. I simply raise that as a question.

With those comments, Mr Speaker, I indicate the opposition's broad support for this bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, as one of the married women who are the subject of this legislation, I felt it incumbent on me to speak in this debate. I have to confess previous ignorance of 2 things which came to my attention in the honourable minister's second-reading speech. The first related to the following comment by the minister: 'If, in a will, property is left to a husband and wife and a stranger, then the husband and wife only take half in total and the stranger takes the other half'. That was indeed news to me. I had been erroneously assuming an equality which obviously I did not have.

Later in his speech, the honourable minister said: 'The only provision in the bill that does not speak for itself is clause 3(3). In common law, when a woman married, her husband acquired the ability to dispose of her property'. I spoke to the honourable minister a little while ago and he assured me that this did not apply only to the 1880s, when the Married Women's Property Act first became law, but also to the current situation which will apply until assent is given to this legislation. I have to confess to previous ignorance of that situation also.

If nothing else, I have learned 2 very important facts with the introduction of this legislation which will repeal the Married Women's Property Act and the Married Persons (Torts) Act and will amend other acts. I had assumed that, in law, I had equality in all things with my husband. I am finding out now that I did not have complete equality. I am therefore very pleased that the government has introduced this legislation to remedy the situation. I would also like to comment that it is succinct legislation. It is the sort of legislation that I like to see before the House, unlike another piece of legislation which the honourable minister will present in relation to the Planning Act - legislation which goes on and on like the babbling brook. That, however, is another story.

Clause 5 is headed 'Spouse as Agent'. Although I agree with the concept of equality in married life, it is a sad reflection on married life that one spouse cannot be a little more accommodating of the other spouse in terms of care. I assume that the provision relating to one spouse not being able to pledge the credit of the other spouse for necessities or to act as agent for the other spouse for the purchase of necessities, refers only to those necessities being used for the sole purpose of the spouse, and not for the children of the union. I would like the honourable minister to assure me that that is indeed the case because I think that, when it comes to the support of the children, either spouse should be entitled to do whatever he or she can in relation to obtaining support from the other spouse for the care of the children. I assume also that the provision made under clause 5 would apply prior to the finalisation of divorce proceedings. Obviously, the provision would not be relevant after a divorce because the 2 spouses would no longer be spouses. They would be separate parties.

Mr Speaker, I think it only right that men and women be considered equally, disregarding their marital situation. However, there is an aspect of married life which the legislation does not address. It relates to titles. Before and after marriage, an adult man is called 'Mr'. Although a woman is sometimes called 'Ms' before and after marriage, in many cases she is called 'Miss' before marriage and 'Mrs' after marriage. I believe a woman should have the same title before and after marriage, as occurs with men. I do not believe that cohabitation with a man should change a woman's title. Mr Speaker, I support the legislation.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I do not intend to go into a great deal in speaking to this bill. The talk of spouses and titles and so forth is too complex for me. I heard that word 'spouse' repeated on about 20 occasions by the member for Koolpinyah.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What is another name for spouse?

Mr SETTER: You tell me. What is another title?

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Partner, cohabitant, friend, lover ...

Mr SETTER: Yes. Husband, wife, mate, male or female partner. There is a multitude of options.

What I am pleased about is that this bill provides equality for married women in a whole range of ways. I must say that I am quite surprised that we do not already have that situation. I am equally surprised that this bill seeks to repeal about 4 different acts, albeit that many of them date back as far as 1883. I thought that the various statute law reform bills passed during the last 5 years would have cleansed our statute books of most of those old acts, although I was surprised to find at the last sittings that the Protection of Children Act of 1904, which I raised in the context of expressing my concerns about the sale of tobacco products to minors, was still on our statute books.

I know that the Statute Law Review Committee, which the government established some 5 years ago, undertook a review of many of those old acts. It was my understanding that, when that committee completed that exercise, very few of those old acts remained on our statute books. Apparently, I was wrong. However, I repeat that I am pleased to see that we are getting rid of a number of those acts today.

In this day and age, with feminism and equality between males and females, and the deletion of 'Miss' and 'Mrs' from most government documents and their replacement with 'Ms', I think that it is high time to remedy this situation, because the reality is that men and women have equal rights in the Northern Territory and in Australia. It is appropriate that that be the case and I totally support such a situation.

Mr Speaker, some of the acts affected by this bill include the Married Women's Property Act, the Guardianship of Infants Act, the Married Persons (Torts) Act and the Trustee Act. Whilst it is appropriate that we take such action with regard to the status of married persons, in particular married women, there are other issues which still need to be addressed in the community. Some of them relate to the federal Family Law Act which, according to some comments I have heard in discussions in the community, tends to disadvantage male persons in some cases. I have heard also of instances in which male persons are disadvantaged in respect of social security entitlements, which are also a federal responsibility. Such issues need to be addressed.

We might argue for equal opportunity for males and females. Indeed, there is no doubt that women have made enormous strides in the last decade in terms of attaining equal opportunity in our community in a whole range of ways. As I indicated earlier, I totally support that. However, we also need to take some cognisance of the fact that, from time to time, males are disadvantaged, particularly in the context of various federal acts. We need to take appropriate action to ensure that, whilst we talk about equal opportunity, it applies to males as well as females. Mr Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, historically, the common law allowed a husband to deal with property which might have been left to or owned by a wife. This caused concern for some parents who might have wished to leave property to a daughter but feared that her husband might squander it. In order to protect such property, parents were forced to include options in their wills which virtually prevented their daughters dealing with the willed property after marriage. That was a fairly unsatisfactory state of affairs and, as I understand this legislation, it will allow such situations to be dealt with much more satisfactorily.

As I see it, clause 3 prevents parents putting conditions on property willed to a daughter. If that was as far as the legislation went, it would mean simply that the common law right of the husband would apply and that he would have open slather as far as the property was concerned. However, clause 5 makes it very clear that a spouse cannot take the other spouse's property and deal with it willy-nilly. Although it is not stated in the legislation, mutual consent between husband and wife would present no problems in terms of deciding how property should be dealt with. One would like to think that such cooperation would exist in most marriages and that actions proposed by one partner have the full agreement of the other and are considered to be wise and sensible. There is provision, however, that one partner can prevent the other dealing with property, which has been acquired, and using it in a manner which that partner considers to be foolish. That is a very big step forward and I am sure that married women will welcome this legislation. I am sure that all sensible people will welcome it. I think that the member for MacDonnell's worries are dealt with in clause 5. It is a far better arrangement. Parents cannot put conditions on the property that they will to their daughters. It is a good step forward.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. I believe that everyone has made sensible comments today. The purpose of the bill is to provide that a married person has legal capacity for all purposes and in all respects as if that person were an unmarried person. It is to provide equality regardless of whether a person is married or not married. It relates also to a number of different acts. It repeals the Married Women's Property Act and the Married Persons (Torts) Act. There is a list of acts in the schedule, provisions of which are also to be repealed: the Domicile Act, the Guardianship of Infants Act, the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act and the Trustee Act. Certain sections of those acts are to be repealed to ensure that there is equality regardless of whether a person is married or not.

It does away with the ability of a father to impose restrictions on the property that he wills to his daughter.

Mr Bell: What about a mother?

Mr MANZIE: There is no restriction there because people will be treated as though they are unmarried.

Mr Bell: It is non-sexist.

Mr MANZIE: That is right. This is totally non-sexist.

I am disappointed that no member except the member for MacDonnell - and he did not make any commitment - mentioned whether this legislation should apply retrospectively. Should we introduce legislation which retrospectively negates any will that has been executed in the past which puts controls on a daughter's ability to deal with property once she has married? Should this Assembly extend the law to cover those past occurrences or should we concern ourselves only with this day hence? I invited comment because, at this stage, I thought that we would probably go along with the majority of states who have not dealt with this retrospectively. However, I note that Queensland and South Australia have published those restraints retrospectively. With those few comments, I thank honourable members for their contributions. Possibly, the discussion on whether there should be some retrospectivity may be taken up later.

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.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr Bell (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I seek leave of absence for the member for Arnhem who has been delayed because of a family bereavement.

Leave granted.

#### INSTRUMENTS AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 232)

Continued from 18 October 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there are a couple of bills before the Assembly that are either entirely or partly consequent on the Registration of Interests in Motor Vehicles and Other Goods Bill on the Notice Paper. The need for a register of hire-purchase agreements with respect to motor vehicles in particular has been debated often in this House. At least 1 aspect of this bill is related to the passage of that bill because it will ensure that goods which are subject to that bill, when it is passed, are not the subject of the Instruments Act.

Further, the bill will impose a 5-year time limit on the registration period of a bill of sale with provision for extension where it is deemed necessary. Also, it will enable a bill of sale in regard to household furniture to be witnessed by anyone who is older than 18 years. This will be consistent with amendments to the Oaths Act which were passed in this Assembly last year. The bill will also amend the index of bills of sale to provide only the names of those who have made or given a bill of sale. The opposition has given consideration to these amendments and is happy to support them.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, this bill has 2 main purposes. As the member for MacDonnell mentioned, the main purpose relates to the transfer of the register of encumbrances from the Registrar-General to the Motor Vehicle Registry. That is taken up also in the Registration of Interests in Motor Vehicles and Other Goods Bill.

The bill contains other provisions which are designed to improve the efficiency of the operation of the Instruments Act. It introduces a 5-year time limit on the effect of the registering of a security. Also, it provides for the Attorney-General to dispose of such registrations after 5 years where it is quite obvious that the particular security should no longer be registered for whatever reason. It seeks to simplify the execution of documents. It will be no longer necessary for a person witnessing a document to be a commissioner of oaths. The person witnessing the document will need merely to be over the age of 18. There is a further simplification of registers. The registrar will no longer be required to hold unnecessary information or information that is not normally sought by members of the community.

These amendments to the Instruments Act are certainly warranted, in particular those related to the Registration of Interests in Motor Vehicles

and Other Goods Bill. With those few words, I indicate that I support the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

PLANNING AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 226)

Continued from 18 October 1989.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, we support the Planning Amendment Bill. However, we feel there is a need to make a few minor comments about its implementation.

A situation in respect of changes to parking arrangements on the corner of Mitchell and Herbert Streets has been brought to our attention. It would appear that, if we are concerned about buildings and parking, issues resulting from that sort of development need to be looked at. Not only the private developers but also the government need to take into account parking implications. With the shortfall in parking that developers may include in their plans, possibly there is a need to look at the way local government uses the money that is contributed from the developers to ensure that it is actually used to provide parking spaces and that it is not simply moved across into Consolidated Revenue.

Mr McCarthy: They have no ability to do that.

Mr BAILEY: They have no ability to do it.

They need to identify the specific parking space that is created by the money that is moved across for that purpose. Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the bill.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the Planning Amendment Bill. In his second-reading speech, the honourable minister referred to the period in 1981 when there was a considerable problem with parking in the city. The city council had great difficulty in trying to cope with the then upsurge of high-rise development within the CBD area, the reduction of parking spots and the increase in traffic flowing into the city. The council tried to negotiate a deal for a high-rise car park. Those honourable members who were here at that time may remember the difficulties experienced in trying to find a suitable site. At one stage, it was suggested that it be located somewhere in the mall. Another site suggested was around at the old Workers Club site in Cavenagh Street and a third was that which was chosen eventually, where the West Lane car park exists today.

During that period, I happened to be the Chairman of the Works Committee of the city council as an elected alderman. I found it extremely frustrating trying to negotiate with developers because of the lack of legislation to allow the council to demand sums of moneys in lieu of the parking provision required under the Town Planning Act and to put that money towards a parking development strategy across the city. In fact, I and several other aldermen raised with the government that, at some stage, there would need to be a

change in the legislation. At the time, we negotiated an arrangement with the developers and the Town Planning Authority.

Because of that solution, and the fact that a very large car park was operating and that a couple of the major developments did not go ahead at that time, the matter was not at the forefront of people's minds. It was not promoted with any sense of urgency. That was particularly so because, at the time, the council negotiated the purchase of property on the corner of Smith Street and Peel Street and property at the rear of the MLC Building for use as long-term car park and storage areas. It also negotiated the purchase of the land in Cavenagh Street alongside the old Woolworths building for use as a long-term storage area. The need was not quite so dramatic at that time.

However, as the member for Wanguri pointed out, the small alteration to the corner of Herbert Street and Mitchell Street last week has resulted in the removal of 6 or 8 parking bays. Thus, there has been another reduction in short-term parking storage close to the centre of the CBD. In fact, Mr Speaker, if you go around the city, you will find that, as a result of the necessity to recoup road surfaces and redirect traffic, in some cases in better ways and central ways, you tend to lose short-term storage bays. I will not say that the situation is critical at the moment, but it is certainly becoming a problem once again to ensure that the traffic that needs to come to the city to trade on a daily basis - and that is the traffic that is needed in the cities - is able to come in, park and continue to effect its short-term trading.

This brings me to another point. In my view, this amendment will certainly allow the Darwin City Council to investigate and possibly initiate a long-term plan with respect to parking arrangements for the city. One of the long-term plans that I believe it should be looking at again is the provision of storage parking that is external to the CBD. It does not necessarily need to be a great distance away. It could be as close as the Frances Bay area or at the other end of the city, say, alongside the land below Myilly Point or wherever. The city workers, who spend most of the day in offices, could park their cars in such areas and use a bus service of some kind to the city centre. That would provide a far preferable way of getting the majority of the work force in and out of the city on a peninsula such as that on which Darwin is situated. It would free the city for considerably more short-term parking which would encourage people from the outer suburbs to come into the city again to continue to trade and it would help to open up the central city areas. With the amount of investment capital within the CBD area, it is necessary to make a strong effort to attract people from the northern suburbs and all the inner suburbs to the city. To allow the traders to get more people into those areas, they need quicker turnaround and easier parking, and that will be possible only when the pressures created through the office workers that come into the city each day are relieved.

As I said earlier, some time has been spent on planning this proposal. I know that the council has been pushing for this for some time and I am pleased that the Territory government has recognised the need for a long-term planning proposal with respect to car parking and the storage of vehicles in the city. I support the bill.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I rise to support this bill. Many years ago, I developed a very costly habit. I would drive my car to the City of Darwin and seek to earn a meagre living in the town. Habitually, I would park my car where it was convenient for me to walk to work and, habitually, I was the recipient of summonses from the city council to pay for this habit of

mine. Throughout all those years, the city council seems to have done nothing to address the continuing and growing problems of parking in the CBD other than to install ...

Mr Perron: Despite your constant contributions.

Mr PALMER: Yes, despite my constant contributions, and I dare say I have contributed much more than many a developer around the town.

The council's parking strategies do not seem to extend to much other than continuing to reduce the amount of parking time available in various areas around town and sending out the brown bombers to enforce the time limits. I cast no aspersions on parking inspectors. They are employed to do a job and it is a job that they do well. Certainly, they deter the overstaying of time limits. On the other hand, we have the city council installing planter boxes along the kerbside in places such as Cavenagh Street, once again reducing the amount of parking space available in the CBD. On the one hand, we seem to have the parkers and, on the other, the planters and ne'er the twain shall meet.

What I want to suggest is that, in the Darwin CBD, there is any amount of vacant, privately-owned land on which one would seemingly be able to park cars. There seems to be no encouragement given by the Darwin City Council to the owners of those various parcels of land to open them up for public car parking. May I suggest that, if the Darwin City Council were to offer a waiver of rates to the owners of those blocks of land merely in exchange for the grading and clearing of the blocks and leaving them open as public car parks until such time as they are required for future development, I dare say that would contribute, at least in the short term, to some resolution of the car parking problems in the CBD.

I do not know if the council's vision would extend to offering such inducements to the owners of such blocks of land but, for some years, I have been of the opinion that there is too much unused land in the CBD which otherwise could be put to car parking or other community uses until such time as it is required by its owners for development. One case would be the land held down the road by Lord McAlpine. That has lain undeveloped for a number of years now, but it could provide anything up to 100 parking spaces in the immediate vicinity of the CBD. For a mere waiver of rates, that land could perhaps be opened for parking and thus, in the short term, reduce the pressure on the formal parking space that is available.

With those few words, I support anything that will contribute to alleviating the problem of parking in the CBD. If the CBD is to grow and prosper, obviously it will have to attract more short-term visitors in the form of shoppers. On the other hand, it has to provide also for greater numbers of employees who will need to park in the CBD for anything from 8 to 10 hours. I support the bill because I believe it is a small step in what is obviously a long process of resolution of problems with parking in the CBD.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I rise to support this legislation, but I wonder why it has been introduced because it was my understanding that, for many years now, the Planning Authority has made decisions in relation to car parking being provided by large developers for the users of their developments. In view of the extended use to which we put motor vehicles, because not many use public transport here, it is necessary that we have adequate parking facilities when we come to town to patronise the shops that are part of the developments.



A very interesting angle to this matter of public car parking was put forward by an independent mayor in a part of Sydney who made a decision - I suppose he and his council made the decision - that, in view of the increasing demand for car parks, the council would not provide them and, in view of the increasing demand for litter bins, it would not provide them. I remember watching a television interview relating to this gentleman's resignation. He had been in the position for a long time and wanted to resign...

Mr Smith: The day before he was due to get his super.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: That is right. He said that - and it was well known in his area - because he did not accede to the public demand for more car parking facilities, there were fewer problems in relation to car parking facilities and the same applied to the litter problem. Because he did not provide bins everywhere, people did not chuck litter around. It seems to be an odd way to look at the situation, but he proved that it worked in his area. Once again, it is a case of indulging in a little lateral thinking, and I do not believe this government is capable of that.

My main comment about this legislation is that I am thankful that it is not any longer. It is long-winded and circuitous enough as it is. If it were any longer, we would still be ploughing through it in 6 months time. I do not know if the legislative draftsman who drafted this legislation is the person who drafted the Married Persons (Equality of Status) Bill. If it is a different draftsman, he or she could well take a leaf out of the book of whoever drafted the latter. This bill is far too long for the subject and it is far too circuitous for readers to comprehend.

This matter has been forced on us by the fact that too many waivers and exceptions have been made in the past when developers have built large buildings in Darwin. I do not have much knowledge of the Alice Springs situation. Too many waivers and exceptions granted in the past have resulted in this problem with parking in the city.

Another matter to be considered is that many people want to go to a particular place in the city and they expect, as a right, that they shall be able to park in the immediate vicinity of that place. In a very short time, people will be forgetting that they have 2 things on the bottom of their body called legs and that legs were made for walking. It does not do anybody any harm to park the car and to walk, however far it is to get to where one is going. A bit of exercise does you good.

While on the subject of car parks, I would like to speak against the Planning Authority and the planners placing ridiculously high standards of service on car parks, especially in the rural area. They do not give consideration to the economy of our natural resources and place ridiculously high standards not only on the number of spaces in car parks but also on the condition of the car parks. They are far too extravagant and they place great restrictions and expenses on small private businesses.

Having said that, I support the thrust of this bill which is to give the councils legislative power to take money in lieu of car parking facilities being provided by developers when the developers prefer to develop the entirety of an expensive site and not provide car parking space.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, Alice Springs is also plagued with car parking problems. Much of this relates to the fact that the Town Planning Authority has been granting waivers for a long time. Some people in Alice

Springs are renowned for being able to persuade the authority to waive the requirement for the provision of the recommended number of car places under the present guidelines. There is one person in Alice who is notorious for this. The rumour is that you should get him to argue your case and you will be able to build a greater wealth-creating property on your block and have less car parking space than the guidelines require.

The very fact that many waivers have been issued in Alice Springs was used by the Commonwealth Public Works Committee when it came to Alice Springs recently. In relation to the new Commonwealth Centre, which is to be built where the Norforce buildings are in Harley Street, it argued that it did not have to provide the number of spaces required by the guidelines because there were plenty of examples of waivers. If it was good enough for the town planners to let others get away with it, they would have a hard job persuading the Commonwealth Public Works Committee to change the design of its building.

One of the things which is grossly unfair is that, in the rating of properties, car parks are treated as a part of the building on the property. The block is so many square metres and the rates are determined by the value of the buildings around. The person who has provided considerable car parking will be hit much harder with rates. No doubt, Coles find that a host of people use its large car park for purposes other than shopping at the Coles complex. I am quite sure that some of the buildings nearby, which provided very little car parking and were allowed to get away with it, use spaces in the Coles car park. Coles now have a sign indicating that the first 3 hours are free and, after that, there is a charge. I do not know whether it has tried to police that or whether it is a bluff. Certainly, it should be brought to the attention of the Valuer-General and the town council that rating might be related to the area of the building or at least a lower rating be imposed on the car parking area. The people who provide such car parks are providing a service to the town.

I am pleased that this legislation will allow the council to require buildings, which have such waivers, to pay an amount to help it provide public parking. Parking space is a problem. Obviously, some people are building more wealth-creating property on their land and, in a sense, are sponging on others who have provided large parking areas.

When this matter was brought to my attention a couple of months ago, I wrote to the Chairman of the Town Planning Authority, Mr Jim Robertson, and asked him how many car parking spaces have been waived since the Territory government took over planning for the Territory. I was surprised that he could not obtain the figure quickly for Alice Springs, but he has promised me an answer. I still do not have one and I have put a question on notice to the Minister for Lands and Housing. I am most surprised that that figure is not readily available. I am not averse to suggesting that, in relation to those who had waivers, consideration be given for retrospectivity to be applied. That is not something that I do lightly. There has always been the possibility that people who did not provide the recommended number of car parks would be required to pay. Why shouldn't those who have got away with it in the meantime be brought to account?

This House should consider that matter. Those who have not provided sufficient spaces are sponging on the ratepayers of Alice Springs and on others who do. They have added advantage in that, by developing more of their property, they have more income-generating capacity. Some people are very pleased to get away with providing fewer spaces. They should be required to make their contribution.

At the last Assembly sittings, I suggested that perhaps the government should bow out of the matter of car parking and leave it to the common sense of developers to consider the parking situation. People who wish to rent property from developers should be able to look at the parking situation to see whether it is adequate in terms of attracting customers and to use that as a bargaining point either to knock the rental down or to say: 'No. That is not the sort of property that I want. You do not have enough parking space. My customers will not be able to get to me. Because they cannot get to me, I am not interested in your building'. If market forces apply, astute people will force the developers to make parking a vital part of their planning in the knowledge that, if they do not, people will not rent their properties.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to support this bill. I really have only one comment to make, which is that it is a great pity that it has taken so long for this legislation to be presented to us. The ability of developers to obtain parking waivers has caused considerable unrest in Alice Springs. I agree with the member for Sadadeen that it seemed to be a matter of how well you could present your case to the Planning Authority, who you employed to prepare your case, how well you lobbied or what influence you could bring to bear on the Planning Authority. There is no doubt about that in my mind.

This is an excellent piece of legislation. If a developer is to receive a waiver, the council can impose some penalty by way of obtaining funds for the financing of additional parking spaces which would otherwise be paid for from the public purse. It is a great scheme. It is a payment-in-lieu scheme. I do not like the notion of retrospectivity, but I certainly take the point that all the parking problems in Alice Springs have come about because of previous waivers. I believe that the legislation will bring some justice back into the system, and I fully support it.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I can see the point of the legislation. The comments of the member for Flynn sparked some memories for me. Whilst I am not saying that anything underhand necessarily occurred, the fact is that certain people had a better idea than others of what made the town planners tick and what sort of arguments had to be presented in order to gain waivers. Other people did not have the same grasp of those matters and that is about as far as I will take the matter.

I have a concern which the minister may be able to clarify. If the council is able to receive money where parking requirements on developers are reduced, it may be inclined to reduce the pressure on developers to provide on-site parking. If the minister finds that to be the case in the first couple of years after this legislation comes into force, and sees that councils are using such moneys to shore up their revenue-raising capacity or to make up shortfalls in their ability to cover expenditure, he could require that the moneys be put into trust accounts or something of that nature which would tie them to the provision of alternative parking arrangements. Such moneys could be used, for example, to finance the debt on the city centre car park in Darwin. In Alice Springs, they could be used to develop additional parking areas around the Todd Mall. I certainly know that, if I am not quick enough in getting into my parking spot in the morning, there is not much chance of me getting in there for the rest of the day. A fair walk is involved when that happens.

I am not saying that we should be including such provisions in the legislation. Hopefully, councils will automatically apply this revenue to the provision of alternative parking. I think, however, that we should keep an

eye on the situation and, if we find that councils are in fact using these moneys to balance their books rather than for the provision of alternative parking, we should take appropriate action.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, some quite sensible comment has been made today and some other comment that was somewhat lacking in substance. Councils are responsible for the provision of parking in municipalities, and rightly so. However, if we do not give councils the power to obtain this financial assistance in order to help them to provide overall parking facilities for the community, we will end up with situations which are the norm in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and almost all other major Australian cities. We are very fortunate in the Territory. We can still drive into Alice Springs and find a parking spot. Possibly, we are spoilt. As the member for Koolpinyah stated, we attempt to obtain a parking spot right outside the door of our destination. I think that most members would agree that, quite often, we can get to within reasonable walking distance of where we are going. However, when we look at the situation elsewhere in this country, it is obvious what will happen if we do not allow councils to continue to plan and take action in relation to parking.

Parking waivers have been granted, although the situation is not quite as the member for Sadadeen described it when he said that developers had got away with not providing parking space. All applications for waivers have to be provided by the Planning Authority in which local government councillors are in the majority. Obviously, some decisions will not satisfy everybody. I would be one of the first to say that I believe that there have been occasions when parking provisions were possibly not as well considered as they might have been. However, such decisions were made by a group which had the task of making them. Obviously, when council elections occur, the community can make its decision about the performance of council members on the Planning Authority.

Mr Collins: People do not know which aldermen are members.

Mr MANZIE: They form the majority on it.

The bottom line is that there is no such thing as people getting away with waivers. There are specific provisions and, although there are some problems in Alice Springs, parking facilities have been provided at fairly considerable expense. The parking areas for the Ford Plaza and the Yipirinya shopping centre spring to mind immediately. Obviously, however, if we do not allow councils to pick up the finance to provide parking for the community, we will have problems.

Finally, I would like to comment on the contributions by the member for Wanguri and the member for Stuart in terms of the need to ensure that the moneys collected are not used by councils for any purpose other than the provision of parking. I would be the first to say that the councils are made up of honourable people and heaven forbid that they would take money under false pretences. However, in order to satisfy the member for Stuart and the member for Wanguri, and to save them the problem of reading the legislation before the House, proposed new section 65A(3) says: 'A municipality shall hold any monetary contribution under this section in a trust account within the meaning of the Local Government Act for the purpose for which the payment was required, and shall apply the money towards providing, within a reasonable time, car parks or parking spaces in a policy area ...'.

Mr Ede: Great minds think alike.

Mr MANZIE: That situation is certainly covered. I hope that, in future, the member for Stuart will read legislation a little more carefully, although I know that he is very busy. I have seen his vehicle in his car park early in the morning. Maybe he leaves it there at night to make sure that he gets a spot in the morning. I thank honourable members for their support.

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.

BUILDING AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 220)

Continued from 18 October 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to comment on this bill and to take the government to task in respect of a long-term problem which has confronted the building industry and many would-be home owners for many years in the Northern Territory, particularly that small set of home owners who have had problems with disreputable builders or builders who have not done the job properly. I will return to the substance of this bill when I have dealt with the serious problems that have confronted numbers of people in the Territory because of their experience with builders who have not been up to the mark.

These builders are not reputable members of the Master Builders Association. In the interim, the best that we have been able to offer by way of protection to people seeking to build homes in the Territory is to say: 'Make sure that your builder is a member of the Master Builders Association'. I do not believe that that is good enough. I do not believe that the checking out of voluntary membership of an association should be a necessary task for a would-be home owner in relation to the construction of a home. I do not believe that this legislature should demand that people who want to build houses, in addition to all of the difficulties they have in raising finance, should also have to check the credentials of their builders. I believe that the government must make a much greater effort in this regard. This is a long-running debate and it is one area in which there is a dramatic difference of opinion between the government and the opposition.

Mr Finch: Reality and practicality versus theory and failure.

Mr BELL: Let me pick up the interjection from the Minister for Transport and Works, sotto voce as it was.

Mr Finch: I gave it to you in English.

Mr BELL: Between the idea and the reality falls the shadow. Fortunately, not many members of this Assembly have fallen in the shadow. We have probably been fairly fortunate in not having builders who leave jobs half completed or inadequately completed prior to departing the Territory. I would have expected the Minister for Transport and Works to be far more sympathetic, given his background in the construction industry. As a civil engineer, he would know that there is a small proportion of fly-by-night builders, usually based outside the Territory, who sell Territorians short in this regard. I would have thought that he would have been sympathetic to action from this legislature to ensure to the best of our ability that Territorians retain

qualified builders. I believe that, in the context of this bill, it is important that the proposal to licence builders be given some strong support.

With this bill, the government is saying: 'We are in trouble. People are coming to us because they have problems with buildings. They are expecting our building inspectors and the government, as their employer, to carry the can when there are problems with buildings, with non-compliance or, specifically, when there are problems with buildings that are inspected as having complied but that in fact prove to be faulty'. What this bill does effectively is indemnify the government against any responsibility in that regard.

I appreciate that actions may be taken against the government by some parties seeking to take advantage of an honest mistake by a building inspector, and let us bear in mind that building inspectors cannot be responsible for any but some basic construction and some basic public health concerns. I do not believe that that genuine aspect of this bill, which the opposition supports in principle, should go without taking into consideration the broader aspect of protecting people against dishonest operators.

I notice, of course, that there are other purposes for this bill. The bill will adopt the Building Code of Australia for the Northern Territory, and this aspect of the bill is supported by the opposition. I notice that discretionary authority will be given to the Building Controller over the regulations and standards that will apply under the Building Code of Australia, and I indicate that we are quite happy to support those proposals.

The third proposal, that the prescribed certificate not be taken as certification that building work is of a particular standard of workmanship or that the materials are of a particular quality is, as I say, a matter of concern. I do not believe that a building inspector should be some sort of supervisor of the contractual arrangement between a person seeking to build a dwelling or whatever else and the builder who is so contracted. I do not believe he should be the inspector of all the detail of that contract. But there are fundamental requirements that we demand, precisely because we have a Building Code, that the government should be responsible for. If we believe, for example, that we must build buildings that will not become a public danger in the event of a cyclone, it is important that the government take responsibility for ensuring that those standards are complied with and that somebody who finds that a building does not comply in that regard has some sort of comeback.

There are certain aspects of the job of a building inspector and of the administrative arrangement, and I am not zeroing in on a particular individual carrying out a particular inspection. However, given the increasing complexity of building arrangements and given the need for technological change in the building industry, I do not believe that it is good enough for a government to slough off the responsibility for ensuring that certain basic aspects of a building, in terms of public health and risk to occupants and other members of the public, can be just signed away in the way that this bill does.

The problem with the bill is its lack of definition. The bill ought to take into consideration different classes of responsibilities for which the building inspection system ought to take responsibility. That is the opposition's specific view with respect to this part of the bill that I want to impress on the government. Quite frankly, I believe that the appropriate way to deal with this bill would be to let it lie on the Table, perhaps until

the February sittings, so that greater consideration can be given, in terms of the minister's own words, to what particular aspects of workmanship - or 'materials' was the other term he used - are necessary for the building inspection system to assure us that they have been carried out.

That is the specific aspect of this bill. I remind the honourable minister that the question of the licensing of builders, as is carried out in many of the states and has in the past, unfortunately, been rejected by this government, is a proposal that would be looked at very seriously by a Territory Labor government. I want to point out to the government that, as we have done in relation to policies we have presented to the electorate in the past and will do again, we will propose that ordinary Territorians have protection against fly-by-nighters. That is something that they do not have currently. That will mean that, if the builder is unlicensed, no building permit will be issued. That is the bottom line. I believe that, with the assistance of industry organisations, such as the Master Builders Association and the Real Estate Institute, such a system would be eminently supportable and would be fairly easy to administer. I do not believe that it would be an administratively expensive task, but it is a task that should be tackled and certainly it will be tackled by a Territory Labor government if those people opposite demonstrate their inability to proceed in a sensible way with proposals such as that.

With those comments, Mr Speaker, I indicate our very qualified support for those aspects of the bill that I have referred to, and our opposition to the removal of the requirement on the building inspection system to stand by its work. Finally, I recommend to the government a builders' licensing arrangement.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I find that the most incredible argument on a bill that I have heard from the member for MacDonnell for some time.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: No, it is not and I agree with him.

Mr FIRMIN: If you agree with that, you have not done your homework either. The proposal to let the bill lie on the Table until February is just a smokescreen so that he can go away and do the homework that he should have done since the last sittings.

This is a very minor amendment in some respects. It provides for the adoption of the Australian Standard Building Code. This code has taken several years to prepare and it will ensure that there is a uniform approach to the building industry across Australia. All agencies and governments in Australia have been involved in its preparation. The input from various organisations and working parties has been considerable. This is the result of 5 or 6 years work by every government and most building organisations in Australia putting together a series of guidelines for the building industry. These will govern every form of building from private dwellings right through to multi-storey and high-rise buildings.

Mr Speaker, I will turn for a moment to the prescribed certificate and the reputable builders that the member for MacDonnell spoke about. I do not know whether the member for MacDonnell has ever had a house built or been involved with the building industry but, when one engages a builder, usually one engages a builder to do specific work that has been planned, designed and drawn up by an architect or an engineer who is responsible for it.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: And you check the builder's credentials.

Mr FIRMIN: And you check the builder's credentials. That is quite correct.

Occasionally, as I did recently, people engage what they think is a respectable and reputable builder to do a job and the work is commenced. The building inspector checks those specific points that he needs to check as the building work proceeds - or the alterations to the building, as applied in my case - and he attends only at those specific points. That is fair and reasonable. He cannot be there 24 hours a day. We would never pay him to do that nor would we expect him to be there. It is not his job to do that anyway. The client has the right to ask the building inspector to come back at any point where he may find that there is something that he is not completely satisfied is being built correctly. I did that because I was not happy with something that was taking place. In that instance, the inspector said that the work was being done satisfactorily, not to my satisfaction necessarily, but to the requirements of the code that is laid down, the Australian Building Code.

I did not like the standard of workmanship, but that was a totally different matter. It had nothing to do with the structural arrangements of the building or whether it met the plans or whether the architect agreed with the way it was being constructed or whether the engineer said that it would stand up. It met all those criteria. It just did not meet the workmanship qualities that I expected of that builder. As is my right, I sacked him and I finished the job myself because I did not like what he was doing. Other people have the same ability to do that. You can always have a private consultant check your work as it proceeds. However, you cannot expect the government to have an inspector on every building site 24 hours a day. It is patent nonsense. He could not possibly be at every part of the construction site in any event. Inherent in the argument by the honourable member opposite was that we would be able to solve this by having inspectors there every day. It is not possible.

The honourable member says that there is no comeback. If there is something wrong with the building, there is a perfectly legal contract between 2 parties and the remedy lies in civil action in the courts. Is he arguing that the comeback should be on the government and the government should write a cheque because somebody is unhappy with a building? That is nonsense. The certificate indicates that the Building Code requirements have been met. It has nothing to do with the workmanship. If you do not like the workmanship, that is your problem and you must sort it out with your builder. It also recognises the fact that the inspector cannot be there all the time. He can be there only for those specific parts of the building alteration or erection that he must inspect. The act provides penalties for the builder if he does not notify the inspector that the aspect of the building that is being erected or altered that requires certification is about to occur. If he does not like the way the concrete is being poured or if there is something wrong structurally, he can have it removed. He has wide-ranging powers. All the certificate indicates is that the building meets those portions of the Building Code that it is required to meet. It does not say anything about workmanship or that the materials used have to be of a particular quality. That is what is recognised in this bill and I support that view.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I am sorry the honourable member closed his remarks because I intended to interject with a question. I support the main thrust of this bill as it relates to a greater discretion for



the Building Controller in the implementation of the uniform Building Code in the Northern Territory. I have had occasion to be at a variance with decisions of the Building Board in relation to building matters of my constituents on many occasions. I agree with the Building Board inspectors, with whom I have maintained reasonably cordial relations, that there must be standards of building construction depending on the situation and the type of building. However, sometimes building inspectors go a little overboard in their enthusiasm for their job in placing on my constituents, who live quite a way from any influences of cyclonic winds, the same standards of building construction as they place on buildings next to the coast.

An emotive subject in the rural area is the building of sheds. There are several subjects that raise argument and emotion in the rural area. One matter raised by people in the Planning Branch a few years ago was that of licensing or not licensing bores. We had an extremely well attended public meeting and the minister at the time was left in no doubt as to the wishes of the people in the rural area: we did not want bores to be licensed.

Another matter raised by the Planning Branch was the number and type of animals that could be kept on different sized blocks in the rural area. Whilst not everybody wanted to keep all the animals, nevertheless they wanted the freedom to keep those animals if they so wished. The Planning Branch agreed at the time that the Litchfield Shire Council and I would get together and put forward proposals. We have been thinking about this and, to date, nothing has eventuated. However, we will be doing something that will reflect the wishes of the people living in the rural area.

Another matter of some argument and discussion is the subject of sheds. Many honourable members opposite may laugh because only the member for Victoria River and the Minister for Mines and Energy live outside a city area. It is a pity the latter is not in the House at the moment because I would expect him to feel some sympathy with the views that I am putting forward in support of my constituents. Many of his constituents come cross the highway for help from my office when they do not appear to be obtaining the help they request from his office.

I refer to the sometimes rigid application of the Building Code to the building of sheds in the rural area. I have objected strenuously to what I see as the one-eyed, rigid decisions of the Building Board. But, I must be fair and indicate that discretion has been used in a number of cases. I was very thankful for that and so were my constituents. At the last sittings, I indicated that the Minister for Lands and Housing was extremely remiss in not answering correspondence that I had written to him. He still has not answered my letter, but he made up for it by granting me an interview in relation to a very contentious subject: the building of sheds in the rural area. I am expecting great things of the honourable minister because I thought I put the case forward to him very clearly. If he requests any on-site inspections, I can arrange those for him. The honourable minister promised to look favourably at the situation, and I have conveyed his views to several of my constituents who had problems.

The Minister for Mines and Energy is now back in the House and I hope that his views are the same as mine. I hope that, in relation to the building of sheds in the rural area, the Building Code will be administered with tact and discretion in the future so as not to incommode my constituents and the way of life that they have adopted in the rural area.

Clause 7, prescribed certificates, relates to section 40 of the principal act and has given me cause for a little concern. I tend to agree with the views of the member for MacDonnell. A certificate is issued by the Building Controller through the building inspector, who comes to the site from time to time when a building is in the course of construction. Of course, a certificate issued cannot relate to every aspect of the building of that structure, but I tend to think that, if a certificate is issued, then the government, through the building inspector, has to stand by that certificate.

In putting forward this bill, the honourable minister said that the certificate will not relate to the particular standard of workmanship or the particular quality of the materials used. In his reply, I would like the honourable minister to say what exactly the certificate will relate to. I can see that, if the implementation of this legislation is not adhered to correctly, and depending on what the honourable minister says in reply, a Pandora's box could be opened in relation to professional indemnity or otherwise with other trades and professions, inspectorial services and professional dealings right throughout the public service. Where decisions are made in relation to members of the public, we could go so far as to refer to the legal profession, the medical profession and the stock inspectors, in relation to the pastoral industry. Members of the public expect that, if a certificate is issued by an inspector, it relates to a certain standard of workmanship that he has inspected. I cannot quite understand clause 7, which relates to section 40, and I hope that the honourable minister will elaborate on that in his reply.

I am pleased to note the discretion given in subclause 9(2) which refers to the regulations adopting the Building Code 'in whole or in part'. That means that the Building Controller will be able to consider the particular time, the particular place and the particular situation, and not make any hard and fast rules relating to position A when the building is built in position B. I support the legislation, but I ask the honourable minister to explain exactly what the building inspector will certify when he issues a certificate.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I had not intended to address this legislation, but was provoked to do so in response to the member for MacDonnell who once again raised the question of builders' licences. Since the honourable member has digressed into such an area, I can indicate at the start that I share his exasperation and frustration that, occasionally, a minority of people still find themselves in strife over a building contract. However, the simple fact is that the solution does not lie with the licensing of builders. The honourable member has argued that we should do what many of the states do. However, the registration of builders simply does not work. It has never worked. It does not work today and there is no way that it will work in the future.

From information I have gained over the last 12 months, it is clear that authorities and organisations interstate are reviewing where they stand in relation to the licensing of builders. They are doing that because, with the licensing of builders, they have created a bureaucratic octopus that gobbles up the consumers' money. It gives people no guarantees, but false expectations which, in themselves, create more disputation than would otherwise occur.

We have had this debate a number of times over the last 5 years. What we need to do is to look at the core of the concern. I guess there will always be home builders who fail to look after their own interests. They go about

building \$50 000 homes, but pay only minimal regard to obtaining technical and professional advice. Indeed, they spend less time in that regard than if they were purchasing an existing home. When buying an existing home, they consult a lawyer and seek other advice in relation to the terms of the contract. As I said, it is necessary to identify the core of the problem which, in most instances, is a lack of appropriate documentation, lack of appropriate contractual arrangements, lack of investigation into appropriate builders and a failure to check their credentials. If a person does not have the capacity to do that himself, there are authorities that can be used to do it. There is the ISO and there are any number of professionals in the game, including architects, engineers and building consultants. All of those people are in a position to assist. The MBA itself can assist also. The honourable member mentioned the MBA as a reputable authority and certainly it is extremely reputable. However, let me say that the MBA does not have a monopoly over the building industry, not by a long shot. There are many builders who do not seek to belong to that organisation. It is an organisation that has been established for self-interest and for self-promotion, and correctly so. I do not have a difficulty with that.

The fear in the community relates to the establishment of a cartel, of a closed shop, and of the consequences that will occur both directly and indirectly, particularly in relation to the effect on costs to the consumer. A great bureaucracy has been created interstate that is legalistic as well as administrative. The honourable member has had a few years now in which he could have carried out a rather more thorough investigation. I suggest that he should talk to the various licensing boards and authorities in South Australia and in New South Wales behind closed doors about their effectiveness. For a start, he should ask them how many builders they have deregistered. That is a very simple question. Out of the thousands of builders licensed and registered in those 2 states, how many have been deregistered?

Mr Collins: How many? None?

Mr FINCH: I believe it is none. Some have been suspended. What happens is that there is a process of appeal and, in the meantime, the builder works for someone else around the corner.

What is needed is a sensible, practical approach to this matter. We have said it in this House before and I will repeat it again: we need to be investigating appropriate ways of ensuring the existence between parties of appropriate contractual arrangements that are enforceable at law. In itself, that will solve most of the problems. That is a voluntary action that people can take now, of course, and they are guided to use the Australian standard form of contract or the MBA form of contract and, in the main, that ought to be almost enough. If they do not have the capacity to supervise the builder and establish a level of competence there, let them engage a consultant to help them to supervise.

Mr Collins: An engineer?

Mr FINCH: It does not need to be an engineer. There are building consultants, even builders themselves in whom the client can have some confidence, who can help them look after their interests and ensure that they are getting appropriate quality and that payments are appropriate to the particular stage of building. The Building Authority is there to inspect the appropriate stages. Certainly, as is often highlighted, there is an unfortunate level of expectation that the building inspectors are in fact

supervisors of the contract. This is not so at all, and those factors need to be made extremely clear to the general public.

I understand that already we have an industry working party investigating the issues surrounding the registration of builders ...

Mr Smith: For a couple of years.

Mr FINCH: No. There are 2 things on which I think they need to concentrate. Apart from the contractual arrangements, virtually the only aspect that cannot be answered in any other practical way is bankruptcy insurance. If you take those 2 aspects, the level of cost penalty or cost imposition for the consumer will be next to none. When I said a year or so ago that I believed there would be at least a \$1500 loading per new house as a result of introducing builders' registration to the Northern Territory, I was corrected by a gentleman who had just arrived in town. I am not sure whether he was the past President of the Master Builders Association of NSW or of the national body. However, he believed that it would be at least double that. That was a prediction from somebody who was in the industry.

I do not believe that everyone suffers. It is only a minority of contracts that go wrong and sometimes that happens because of a lack of attention on the part of the consumer himself. Sometimes, unfortunately, it is because the builder is disreputable. However, such builders are few and far between and the sorts of problems outlined by the member for MacDonnell cannot be addressed through a translation ...

Mr Smith: You license motor vehicle dealers yet you will not licence builders. It does not make any sense.

Mr FINCH: Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition chips in again on matters that he does not understand. I would ask him to send one of his colleagues ...

Mr Smith: Why do you licence motor vehicle dealers if that is your attitude?

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition displays his absolute lack of understanding of these matters.

Mr Smith: Tell me. I am asking a question.

Mr Firmin: Concentrate on the issue.

Mr Smith: He is not going to answer.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, it warrants an answer but it does not warrant further digression in this debate on the Building Amendment Bill.

Addressing specifically the matters raised by the member for MacDonnell, membership of the MBA does not guarantee results either, even though it is a most reputable and excellent body. In the instances that have been brought to my attention in relation to disputation with MBA members, the advice usually is to see a lawyer. We are not getting anywhere really with solving the real problems that these people are experiencing. There are 2 clear directions to take. One is to ensure that people take proper advice. Given the significant investment that they are making in a new home, to obtain appropriate legal and technical advice would incur nowhere near the cost that the licensing of

builders would impose on them. Licensing would not affect in the slightest the dishonest operator who intends to shoot through.

Mr Smith: Rubbish!

Mr FINCH: It would not, Mr Speaker. If a builder intends to leave town, what does it matter whether he is licensed or not?

Mr Perron: It has never reduced the complaints.

Mr FINCH: I take up the interjection made by the Chief Minister about it not reducing complaints. In fact, the opposite has occurred. It has been found that the disputation between parties in South Australia and New South Wales is exacerbated by the very existence of licensing and the high expectation that licensing promotes in the community. People are nit-picking about door locks, the edge of painting and other things that they might normally accept or come to a reasonable arrangement with the builder on. It promotes litigation. I believe that the legal unit attached to the licensing board in New South Wales consists of something like 21 people. The majority of those are lawyers and they are always in court. People do not set about solving their own problems directly in a normal contractual arrangement. They have high expectations of another body to which they can take their problems. What good is that to the consumer?

There is no doubt in my mind that we are proceeding along the right track in the Northern Territory. It is a matter of promoting business practices among the community. I am sure that the working party which is investigating the whole issue will come up with some practical solutions to the problem rather than flicking the switch and suggesting that transplanting the New South Wales system or another interstate system to the Territory will provide the answer. It certainly will not. The bill is commendable. We are working towards uniformity although obviously there are components of the bill which relate more to the Territory than elsewhere. The legislation will be nothing but beneficial to the building industry, and home purchasers ought to be comforted by it.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I want to take issue with one point made by the member for MacDonnell. He said that, if builders are not licensed, they simply do not do any work. I wonder how many buildings have been constructed by members of charitable organisations providing their labour voluntarily. I refer the honourable member to an example which is dear to my heart, namely the hall at the back of Adelaide House in the grounds of the Flynn Uniting Church. I can assure the honourable member that that hall was built by the most amateur of builders. I know that because I was one of them, together with other members of the church. Whilst the brickwork is not brilliant, I can assure the honourable member that the building is strong. In fact, I drew up the plans for the building. I consulted the building inspector at every stage of the game and obtained his advice on specifications and what was needed. We certainly made sure that he inspected the trenches and that there was no loose dirt at the bottom before we attempted to pour. He inspected the steelwork in the foundations and the tie-down bolts. He inspected the steel rods that ran through the walls of the building. He witnessed the pouring of the concrete and inspected the tying down of the beams which supported the roof. We needed him to ensure that we did the job properly. We wanted it to be done properly.

The job was done for a mere pittance. If we had employed a builder to do it, the hall would have never been built because the church simply did not

have the necessary money for it. Mr Weissnicht was the building inspector at the time and I appreciated his efforts in advising us properly. That sort of cooperation was really marvellous. I know that that hall would not have been built unless amateurs had provided the labour. It is widely used by various groups and is quite an asset to the church and the Alice Springs community. I wonder what sort of education and experience the member for MacDonnell envisages as being necessary in order to obtain a builders' licence. No doubt, he would require a fair bit of education and experience before he would say that a person was fit and proper to carry out such work.

That brings me to another point. A reputable builder may find that, on occasions, his quotations have been less than accurate and he is having problems in terms of financing a job. In spite of his reputation, he may be tempted to try a few shonkies. Only last weekend, I was talking to friends about building. I was told how a contractor called the building inspector to check the steel in some foundations. When one area of the foundations had been checked and passed, the builder removed the steel and poured the concrete, subsequently moving the steel to the next area. The first area had no steel in it whatsoever, but the certificate stated that it had been inspected and conformed to requirements. The contractor repeated this procedure with the next area. Such games are being played.

Mr Finch: They would have been of equal quality.

Mr COLLINS: Yes. Perhaps the last area would have had the steel in it. You never know. On the other hand, the contractor might have taken it out for another job in another place. This sort of thing has occurred. It has occurred in the electorate of Sadadeen. I have raised in the House before the fact that some Housing Commission contracts were supposed to be carried out according to the cyclone code. I wish that the member for Koolpinyah were right about cyclones not occurring inland. I would have liked to have dodged one that came my way last Friday and caused a bit of damage. It cost me my Rolls Royce, Mr Speaker, but that is by the by. We do experience strong winds inland from time to time.

To return to the Housing Commission contracts in Sadadeen, the documents specified tie-down bolts, rods running from the foundations to the bond beam and appropriately attached roofs. Tenders were made on the basis of those specifications and the job was awarded to a company. Later, however, it became apparent that the tie-down bolts and rods were not installed. I believe that the Housing Commission inspector responsible for supervising the work was transferred subsequently to Katherine as a result of his lack of care. That might explain some of the problems with buildings in Katherine, although that is pure conjecture. However, that is all that happened to him.

A building sold by the Housing Commission was operated on by removing 2 bricks from the wall, drilling holes in the concrete, and inserting rods, which were held in place by epoxy resin, and subsequently welding the pieces together and securing them with tie-down bolts. In my view, such an arrangement would not be all that strong. Certainly, the Housing Commission and the Territory taxpayer were put to considerable expense because somebody did not do the right thing in the first place. It is not good enough. There are tricks. I would suggest that every building inspector be equipped with a metal detector in order to check whether steel is still in place after the foundations have been poured and to check along the walls to see whether tie-down rods are in place.

I strongly support the view that the job of the building inspector relates to the structural strength of the building and not to the final finish. You could never put the building inspector in that position. The Minister for Transport and Works said that people could employ professionals to act as supervisors and to deal with builders. However, I believe that most people should have enough nous, having engaged a builder, to check the standard of that builder's previous work. I would ask a prospective builder to show me an example of the final finish that he is able to produce. I would include in the contract a clause stating that final payment would not be made until the final finish was satisfactory to the consumer. It is often said that the final payment should be withheld for 3 months following completion of a job because things can happen to a building in that time. That type of clause should be standard. It ought to be in the contracts.

Builders should be required to build to the Australian Design Standards, which obviously we will accept here today. If a builder does not build to those standards, there should be a legal requirement that he take whatever action is necessary to bring the building up to those standards. That may entail demolition and rebuilding which could lead to bankruptcy. An insurance requirement could be interesting, although insurance is just a means of spreading the burden across the wider community and could lead to increased costs to the consumer.

I certainly do not support the licensing of builders. I think that, in a sense, what is being proposed here is something that I suggested ages ago. There ought to be a document which is handed to the owner of the building. It should list every structural stage from the foundations to the roof. Each stage should be signed by an inspector and the document should go with the house. I believe that similar documents go with Rolls Royces. Mr Speaker, you might be able to clarify that point. Houses are pretty important to people and I think that there is a role for the government on the structural side. If a house has been built according to the design rules and everything is hunky dory, the certification should say so.

A home is generally the most expensive purchase which people make and it entails repayments over 20 or 30 years or more. However, I do not believe that the licensing of builders will provide the protection which the member for MacDonnell seeks. It would create more problems than it would solve. Any sensible person contracting someone to build for him should find out as much about the contractor and the project as possible. He should check that the work is done properly because, if it is not, he will be the loser. Time and time again, on television programs like 'The Investigators', we see sad stories about people who have been taken for a ride. I think that program probably does some good. It wakes people up to the importance of taking a very personal interest in such matters.

Mr Finch: They are all registered builders.

Mr COLLINS: Yes, a large number of the sad stories occur in New South Wales where all builders have to be registered. That requirement certainly has not solved the problems. Buyer beware is not an unreasonable proposition in such an important matter. One should take every effort to ensure that work on one's own property is done properly even if that means taking time off work to carry out on-site inspections. If people have any worries, they should inspect the job to ensure that it is being done properly.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, builders must recognise that the ultimate responsibility for their actions rests with themselves. 'It is

therefore essential to ensure that persons entering the industry as builders are sufficiently competent and able to perform to an acceptable industry standard. In the Northern Territory, no such definition of standards of competence or ability exists'. Mr Speaker, those are not my words. Those are the words of the Master Builders Association of the Northern Territory.

Mr Perron: They have been pushing registration for years.

Mr SMITH: Of course. To its credit, the MBA has been pushing for builders' registration for 15 years or perhaps longer. I would like to say to the Master Builders Association that a Labor government in the Northern Territory will register builders in order to provide the necessary protections to people in relation to the most important purchase of their lives.

In the Northern Territory, we register motor vehicle dealers, electricians and plumbers, and we even provide registration of a sort for door-to-door salesmen. However, in relation to the most important purchase or transaction that most people in the Northern Territory make - that is, the building of their own home - we will not provide any protection to consumers. It really is not good enough to say that the consumer should beware because that is not a principle that we accept in other areas. It would be useful if, at the least, we had some consistency. If the government believes in the principle of buyer beware, let it dismantle its consumer protection legislation and dismantle its motor vehicle dealer licence protection. For some strange reason that no one can understand, the government is not prepared to put in place a system that protects the people who want to buy houses, who want to set their roots in the Northern Territory and who want to demonstrate a long-term commitment to the Northern Territory. This government is not prepared to offer them that protection. If it did offer that protection, people in the Northern Territory might be more prepared to invest some money.

Mr Coulter: You put that in your election platform and we will have ours. We will see what happens.

Mr SMITH: We will certainly see what happens. The Master Builders Association made a measured contribution to the working party reviewing consumer affairs policy in 1986. We have another mirror job occurring again. According to the Minister for Transport and Works, we have another working party looking into the same matter in order to keep the industry quiet. The Master Builders Association has put forward a considered case for the registration of builders in the Northern Territory. It says that builders must recognise that the ultimate responsibility for their actions lies with themselves. That is a quite reasonable proposition that the government accepts in many other areas and yet, for some strange reason, is not prepared to accept this area.

Mr Speaker, there is no point in going on. This government has demonstrated that it has a closed mind. This is one additional reason that the voters of the Northern Territory have for voting Labor at the next election.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I had not planned to contribute to this debate, but I have heard this argument from the opposition over some years. They have not yet addressed any of the fundamental issues that have been raised continually in the debate. The Leader of the Opposition again made a fundamental error. It is easy to talk simplistic, populist nonsense about what a wonderful world will be created if we set up a bureaucracy to stamp bits of paper. All of a sudden, all the



problems of the world will go away. That is what they are trying to sell to the people of the Northern Territory. What nonsense!

Places where builders are registered have exactly the same problems as consumers find in the Northern Territory. They are not obtaining satisfaction. They are not successfully deregistering builders because of the arguments of natural justice, the right to earn a living etc that are made in the courts. They have succeeded in building secure, long-term jobs for a number of people administering the system, they have provided a mechanism to create a closed shop for people in the building industry to minimise competition and they have added to the cost to the community. The building costs to the community have risen as a consequence of the litigation.

If honourable members opposite want to promote the cause of licensing of builders, they must come up with the practical answers. They must come up with the administrative mechanisms that they would apply. It is not good enough to wave their hands against the advice of members of the Northern Territory Public Service, the people who actually administer this legislation. It is not good enough to make broad-brush statements that somehow everything will be rosy in the garden, when evidence from interstate indicates the opposite.

What do they hope to achieve by registration? Do they hope to get better quality workmanship? What happens if a dispute arises about the quality of workmanship? The case has to be argued out in court. If the complainant is successful, he has then to get the contractor to pay up or fix it. What is the difference between a registered builder and a builder in the Northern Territory in that case? If a client feels that a builder has not done a satisfactory job and is incompetent, he can complain to the Builders' Registration Board as well, and another process of litigation will occur. The board may seek to suspend or even to cancel the builder's licence or registration. If it is successful in doing that, the builder can appeal. Mr Speaker, look at the history of success in disciplining builders effectively under a registration and licensing system and you will see that it simply has not worked.

Security deposits and trust accounts are other matters that have been debated in relation to this subject. Examinations have been carried out on that in the Northern Territory. The tragedy is that the Northern Territory building sector is so small that the cost to the consumer is something like 10% on the cost of a house to pay the insurance premium into the fidelity fund. I can confirm that figure later. It has been some 3 or 4 years since that work was done. The industry is saying that it does not need a fidelity fund. If there is no fidelity fund, how does the consumer obtain effective benefit?

Do members of the opposition want to impose a 10% or 20% burden on every householder or do they want to provide a mechanism that maximises the chance of obtaining a house that meets building standards and reaches a satisfactory quality in accordance with the price paid? If a 15 squares home is built for \$70 000, it will not be of the same quality as a 15 squares home built at a cost of \$150 000. The materials and the finish relate to the price paid. Owners make those compromises when deciding what they want. It is no good saying later that they did not really want that standard of wall but rather another standard of wall, when they paid for the first one. That is the sort of litigation that arises far too often.

If people feel that the contract has not been complied with, options are open to them. This process enables the consumer, the person having his house built, to have professional advice available to him and professional inspection of the builder's work to ensure that the quality is there. I can advise honourable members that the process under way right now with respect to consumer affairs legislation for next year will provide for standard form contracts for building and subcontracting work to provide assistance for people. Those are available already through the Master Builders Association. Unfortunately, builders who are not members of the association and some who are members of the association do not necessarily use them. It is intended that that be addressed in consumer affairs legislation next year.

If a person does not have the contractual protection and the professional advice, registration or otherwise will not help him. That is the problem with the opposition's argument. It is simply impractical, populist nonsense. It is a classic socialist response given without thinking through the practicalities. If we go down this road of registration, we will go down the road of imposing costs on the community for no practical gain. If people think that that is simply waffle, let me say that I have had personal cause to look at this very closely. I have mentioned in this House before that I was ripped off personally over a building job on my own home. The building work fell to pieces in 3 months. I took action and won the case relating to poor workmanship. The person went into voluntary liquidation and I did not recover the money, and I had to pay the lawyers as well. As a consequence, I can understand the problems that people are experiencing. The experience cost me more than the original job, and still the job was not done. Therefore, I do understand the problems in a very personal way. Nevertheless, no licensing system would have helped me in that process and it would not help anyone else. This legislation will help, and that is why it is good legislation.

Mr Bell: It must have been approved, and then it fell down.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I have found the debate on this legislation most disappointing. We have been debating the registration of builders and, of course, the bill before the House does not relate to the registration of builders in any shape or form. Again, that is typical of members of the opposition. They fail to look at the detail of what has been presented. The bill relates mainly to the adoption of the Building Code of Australia which will provide uniformity throughout the country.

In relation to restrictions on builders and registration of builders, all members of this House deplore the practices of shonky builders, deplore the practices of those who will take advantage of others and deplore those people who rip people off through the employment of unprofessional or unsatisfactory building standards or behaviour. However, to claim blithely that registration is the cure is absolutely crazy. The reality is that New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia all have registration for builders. All we hear about is problems from New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. You turn on the television and 'The Investigators' tells it all. It does not cover Northern Territory builders. It covers builders in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia or Western Australia, where registration exists. Obviously, it is not the answer.

Mr Bell: That is a result of being located where 'The Investigators' team is.

Mr MANZIE: 'The Investigators' team has been up here on other matters. They have been here.

Mr Smith: They have been here on a housing matter.

Mr MANZIE: But, it is not the answer.

Mr Smith: In Sergison Circuit, if you have forgotten.

Mr MANZIE: The member for Millner knows it all. He is very clever, very smart.

Mr Smith: Caught out again. Do Nothing Daryl knows nothing this time.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, isn't he very clever? He has just proposed the cure to the problem. He has given us the cure. However, the cure that he proposes is the same cure that has been put in place in the rest of Australia, and it has not worked anywhere. But, of course, it will work for him.

If he had any sense, and he wanted to try to convince us, because we all have the same aim, he would show us how the registration of builders would provide the protection that he wants. He cannot do that because it does not work but, if he could come up with a process that would do the sort of things he claims it would, I am sure no member of this House would oppose that. How could they? To propose as a solution a system that has failed everywhere in Australia and that will cost the consumer thousands of dollars is ridiculous. I just cannot understand the member for Millner. I am sure that one of the reasons why the electorate does not support him is because people do not understand him. Or perhaps they do understand him and they are in despair, like the member for MacDonnell, who occasionally puts his hand in the air and tries to remove the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, registration does not work. If anyone can come up with proposals that can solve the problems, I am sure those proposals will be adopted. To conclude, I would like to point out that, as the member for Leanyer said earlier, a working party comprised of the MBA, architects, engineers, plumbers and drainers, and the Real Estate Institute is looking at the problems of professional certification. In addition, it is examining insurance and other matters. These are complex issues and there is no simple answer. If there were a simple answer, does the Leader of the Opposition think we would not have jumped on the bandwagon and produced it? But we are not going to jump on the simple solution proposed by him because it does not work. If he can come up with something that will work, we will do it.

Mr Smith: Do not worry about it. We will do it!

Mr MANZIE: There is a challenge for you. You are so clever. You propose and prove that something will work and that it will not cost the consumer an arm and a leg and we will take it up.

Mr Smith: We are going to do it ourselves.

Mr MANZIE: There is a challenge for you. Rise to it. You cannot. No, you will propose something that will cost Territorians \$5000 ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Could you remind the Minister for Lands and Housing that he should be addressing his comments through the Chair and not directly to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr Bell: Fair go!

Mr MANZIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Coulter: Do you dissent from the ruling?

Mr Bell: I will not waste your time. What he had to say was so inane anyway.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I will say it again slowly so that the member for Millner can understand it. Sometimes he is a bit slow on picking things up. If he can come up with a scheme and prove to honourable members in this House that that scheme will protect people against unscrupulous building practices, and that it will not cost them an arm and a leg, we will look at it and adopt it. If he continues to promote schemes which have failed everywhere else, he cannot expect the government to pick them up.

In the Territory, we provide a certificate of completion. We are proposing to change the wording of that document in order to limit liability. In all the states, classification certificates are supplied and these do not have the type of detail that is in our certificate of completion and therefore do not bring about the possibility of the government wearing total liability for the malpractice of a builder. We are not trying to remove a liability. All we are doing is limiting it to the role that the inspector plays. I do not think that anyone should have any problems with that. The bill itself relates to a standard code across Australia. There are to be variations in each area to suit particular conditions. I believe it is a step in the right direction and I hope that the legislation will be enacted in all areas of Australia. There are some parts of the country where governments are a bit slow but, obviously, they will all enact such legislation in due course.

I commend the bill in its present form to honourable members. I remind honourable members that it does not relate to registration of builders and I point out very clearly that the limit on the liability relates to the inspectorial function only and not the malpractice of the builder.

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.

LAND AND BUSINESS AGENTS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 225)

Continued from 18 October 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to make some comments in respect of this amendment to the Land and Business Agents Act. I note that the purpose of the bill is to simplify the system whereby interest on moneys held in trust by land and business agents is paid into the Land and Business Agents Fidelity Guarantee Fund set up under section 94 of the principal act. The thrust of the bill is to eliminate intermediary steps requiring agents to

deposit a proportion of their trust money in interest bearing accounts and then to pay the interest from those funds into a consolidated interest account at regular intervals. This bill provides, in contradistinction, for agents to pay all of their trust money into approved interest bearing accounts. Interest from these accounts is then transferred by the financial institutions directly to the fidelity fund. That means that the agents do not have to deal with the paperwork and the financial institutions will do it on their behalf.

I wish to reflect some concern expressed by the Real Estate Institute in respect of this proposal that, instead of the interest on two-thirds of the amount held in their trust fund being transferred to the fidelity fund, all of that amount will be transferred. It has been pointed out by the institute that a number of land and business agents who are covered by this act operate in a situation where they require an overdraft from a bank, and the discretion they have about the placing of that remaining one-third of their trust accounts and the use of interest from them is relevant to their negotiations of their overdraft situations with the banks and, presumably, other financial institutions with which they have dealings. I am surprised that that concern was not addressed by the honourable minister in his second-reading speech, and it is one point that I want to make.

While I was giving consideration to this bill, a couple of other questions were raised in my mind. I do not necessarily expect the honourable minister to give the answers to them off the top of his head but, in the time available to me, I was not able to identify the overall pattern of the use of the fidelity fund in the Territory. I would be interested to know, for example, how many claims are made against the fund in any given year, the bases for those claims and how much money is involved. I do not expect the honourable minister will be able to provide those answers off the top of his head but I will certainly be investigating answers to those questions in the future.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I will certainly obtain that information for the member for MacDonnell. I would like to point out to honourable members that this scheme is very similar to the one that operates in South Australia. I thank the honourable member for his comments.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 4 agreed to.

Clause 5:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 92.1.

This adds new provisions so that agents are obliged to hold all trust moneys in an account of a kind agreed to by the bank or approved building society and the Funds Control Committee. Such an account will be one in respect of which the relevant bank or approved building society has agreed with the Funds Control Committee that the moneys will accrue interest at a specified rate and in a specified manner, with the interest being paid at agreed times by the bank or building society directly to the Funds Control Committee. Subclause (1)(a) makes it clear that these amendments do not affect the position under the Tenancy Act whereby real estate agents along with lessors can hold bond moneys in trust in such a way that interest accrues to the agent as a fee for arranging for the holding of the bond money.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 92.2.

This inserts after proposed section 55 the following: 'Subsections (4) and (5) do not apply to or in relation to an account indicated in accordance with subsection (1)(c) as a security deposit account'. The main effect of that provision is to repeal section 93 and auxiliary provisions. Those provisions contain the scheme presently in force which is being replaced by the scheme in schedule 5.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Remainder of the bill taken as whole and agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, a woman in my electorate was raped. That woman lived on her own. In my view, very bravely, she contacted a friend. The friend took her to the hospital where she underwent a medical examination. In the meantime, the police nabbed the alleged offender who was charged. For 3 to 4 days, the woman heard nothing. After the medical examination, the woman went to the friend's house for a night and then went to her own home. That situation was complicated by the fact that the alleged rapist lived in the same street and she saw him on a regular basis. That woman received no counselling. She did not know to whom to talk or to whom to express her concerns. Finally, on the Tuesday, 3 or 4 days later, she came to me. I cannot possibly realise how difficult it must have been for a woman in that circumstance to come to a member of parliament and say: 'I have been raped and I need some help'. I cannot possibly realise how difficult that must have been for the woman involved.

Mr Speaker, by coincidence, one of the hospital social workers turned up that afternoon and, next morning, was able to put her in contact with the Ruby-Gaea Centre Against Rape. I want to make it clear that I am not critical of the hospital or the hospital social workers because rape crisis counselling is not their job. What it does reveal is - and we mentioned this matter at the last sittings - that the sexual assault referral system in the Northern Territory has broken down.

A counsellor was employed at the Royal Darwin Hospital until May 1988. She had been expected to operate an on-call service 24 hours a day. She provided an after-hours, call-out service for 4 months, but she was not being paid for that service. She decided not to provide the service until some recognition was given of the need for the service. That recognition never came. In other words, she was never offered after-hours payment. Eventually, she left the job as a result of burn-out. Since then, 18 months ago, the department has not been able to recruit a counsellor to provide the service. There were reasons for that. There were no other counsellors to provide backup and support. There was no remuneration for an after-hours service and, in the view of some people, the service was inappropriately located at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

For the last 18 months, as my constituent found out, it has been a matter of taking pot luck. If the hospital social workers had time - and they are not experts on this matter and it is not their job - they would try to provide some assistance. If you were lucky enough, you might hear about the Ruby-Gaea Centre Against Rape, which is government funded. I will come to that in a moment. There has not been an arrangement on a regular basis between the hospital and the police and the Ruby-Gaea Centre Against Rape for the referral of cases. That is something that is wrong as well. This woman was unlucky. For 3 or 4 days, she had no assistance, and that occurred at a very crucial and critical time of her life.

We have this situation where the system has fallen down. I understand that the department has decided to establish a service on the ground floor of the Casuarina Plaza building, and that it has advertised for staff but so far has been unsuccessful. I am advised that, in order for the service to operate at a minimum level, 2 counsellors, a receptionist and payment for after-hours service are necessary. I was further advised, as of last week, that the 2 counselling positions had been reapproved and I understand will be readvertised. However, I understand - and there may be some doubt about this - that the receptionist position had not been approved and, most importantly, funds for an after-hours service had not been approved. In other words, essentially, overtime payment for the 2 counsellors had not been approved. If that is the case, it is wrong. It does not require any wit to work out that most rapes or attempted rapes occur after normal business hours. It is not satisfactory and, if that is the situation, it needs to be addressed.

In the interim, in this 18-month period, the Ruby-Gaea Centre Against Rape has been doing a sterling job. That service was funded under the SAP, the Support and Accommodation Program, and has involved both Commonwealth and Territory funds - \$60 000 from each, from memory. The service is under enormous stress and is in danger of folding because of that stress. A submission has been made to this government requesting money for more staff. The service is funded to pay 2.5 staff and these staff are expected to counsel women and accompany them to court, pay lawyers and doctors, train volunteers, run groups, work with families, supervise overnight accommodation, provide community education, liaise with community groups, administer the service, maintain the house and surrounds etc. They might possibly be able to do that if proper support was provided by the government through the provision of a sexual assault referral service. The staff at the Ruby-Gaea centre are stretched to the limit. In the 12 months between April 1988 and April 1989, they saw 148 rape victims plus 54 relatives, a total of 202 people. That is about 1 every 1.5 days. Let us not forget that rape counselling requires intensive counselling for the first week or so and regular visits after that. Mr Speaker, 202 cases in a single year for a staff of 2.5 would stretch anybody to the limit.

The government has neglected this matter for too long. I know that there have been some good reasons for that, but no reason could be good enough to leave women in the situation that my constituent was in following that rape just 2 weeks ago. The government took 3 years to become convinced of the need for a rape crisis service. It has allowed the Sexual Assault Referral Centre service not to exist for 18 months. It has decided finally to re-establish the service, but it has set it up to fail, if my information is correct, by not providing for the employment of a receptionist and sufficient funds to enable an after-hours service to operate. If there is to be an effective service, there is a need for both the SARC and the Ruby-Gaea centre to be funded appropriately and sufficiently. There is a need for both services to

function. One is no more important than the other and one should not be seen to be in competition with the other. The SARC could most appropriately provide the court advisory service by presenting professional assessments. It would also have an essential role in professional counselling for individuals and groups on an ongoing basis. The counsellors should be required to attend at the hospitals to deal with the initial crisis interview before referring the women to the Ruby-Gaea Centre Against Rape for accommodation. The Ruby-Gaea centre would play a key role in providing accommodation, appropriate counselling and support, a telephone crisis service and accompanying women to a range of appointments in addition to running support groups.

In a properly structured situation, the 2 services have a valuable complementary role to play, perhaps with a little overlap on occasions. However, there is a real danger that neither of the services will exist unless serious attention is given to the matter immediately. I ask the honourable minister to give it his serious attention. To be fair to him, I know from his answers in the committee stage of debate on the Appropriation Bill that he is aware of the need to do something in this regard. When such things are brought home on a personal basis, as happened to me, their seriousness and importance become very obvious indeed.

The incident led me to look at the whole question of victims of crime and what sort of support we give them in general. I know that, if the system had been functioning effectively, there would have been support available for that woman, and I am not talking particularly about rape cases. I know that, in situations involving murder - and there have been some horrific murders in the Northern Territory in the last few years - there is no formal requirement to provide the families of murder victims with assistance and counselling. I know that the issue has caused concern in other parts of Australia and I will take a couple of minutes to describe what is happening in South Australia.

Basically because of the efforts of Mr Ray Whitrod, a former Queensland Police Commissioner, South Australia has a victims of crime service. It was established in 1979, at the instigation of the relatives of the victims of the Truro murders, who felt particularly angry about the confusion they had experienced, the way the system had treated them and the lack of information available. They have played a significant role in lobbying for victim impact statements and crimes compensation, which have been discussed in this House, and a court companion scheme. They were crucial in influencing new developments in the criminal justice system.

Within the South Australian police department, there is a Victims of Crime Unit. Basically, this is an information unit which provides research and training for police officers, to raise the awareness of police in respect of matters relating to victims. In South Australia, the relatives of victims and the victims themselves are afforded protection under the Bill of Rights of Victims. Information is available also in the form of a book entitled 'Information for Victims of Crime'. The unit is funded by the Attorney-General's Department. It receives additional funding from a levy paid by offenders to the Victims of Crime Fund. That levy is acquired from fines imposed for motor vehicle and drug offences. This money contributes to compensation payments, research activities and salaries for staff employed by the unit.

The unit is staffed by a senior social worker, 2 additional counsellors and 3 clerical staff. In addition and most importantly, it relies on the services of 30 volunteers. The role of the unit is to provide counselling, community education, assistance relating to court and police procedures, crime



prevention, client advocacy and contributions towards the development of an undergraduate diploma in victimology. As you would expect, Mr Speaker, most of the unit's client work relates to issues of grief. In South Australia, the unit receives up to 30 new referrals per week and, in a 1-month period, it deals with about 100 clients. The victims of crime system in South Australia has gained enormous support and has been of considerable use to a large number of people.

Having floated that concept, I am prepared to say that I do not have all the answers. It is all too simple sometimes to say that we should create another function for government, thereby creating 2 or 3 new public service positions. I do not want to do that, but it is certainly an area which needs to be looked at, and members on this side of the House will be doing that.

To go back to the beginning, Mr Speaker, I ask the honourable minister to provide this House with an assurance that he is treating the matter of establishing a sexual assault referral centre as a matter of urgency, that he is devoting his best efforts to it and that, in the interim, he is ensuring that at least a minimal service is provided to rape victims. That minimal service should ensure that, if rape victims are taken to the hospital, as most of them are, they are put in contact with hospital social workers and, most importantly, that the Ruby-Gaea centre is notified so that people with expertise can talk to these women. These are vital steps. All the evidence indicates that counselling has to be intense and early. Otherwise, it is not nearly as effective.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, before I speak on the subject which I intend to address this evening, I feel that it is incumbent on me to remark on some of the statements made by the Leader of the Opposition. I support fully his remarks about the necessity for helping the victims of bodily assault and rape. However, I believe that we are forgetting something.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned that victims of crime must be recompensed. He raised too the subject of the families of those victims, who need to be assisted and counselled as well. However, there was one gross omission in his remarks and perhaps it was simply an oversight. I believe that we must give more consideration to making the perpetrators of crimes pay and pay and pay. If any monetary recompense is to be made, I believe that the perpetrator of the crime should be made to pay first, before the taxpayers and other members of the community are asked to pay. I have no objection to recompense being offered by the state to victims of crime, but I believe that insufficient attention is paid to calling the perpetrators of crimes to account and this must be paramount in any consideration of the situation. Perhaps I am old-fashioned, Mr Speaker. Perhaps I belong to the school of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I believe that my views are shared by many members in the community. I believe that counselling is necessary for victims of crimes but an aspect of the counselling should be that, when you are knocked down for whatever reason, you have to live your life and learn to fight back. You have to learn to fight and fight and, if necessary, to fight the perpetrator of the crime in any way that is possible.

Mr Speaker, I wish to speak this afternoon about a document which was sent to me. It is a newsletter issued by the Australian Tourism Industry Association. I read all the newsletters, magazines and promotional material sent out by organisations because, now and then, one finds items of interest in them.

Mr Ede: You are a hero.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I do not say that I read them thoroughly. I skip through them. I can read quite quickly.

This newsletter contained a very interesting item which would interest the honourable member who interjected. Its heading referred to a new tourism market and its contents focused on selling rural Australia to urban Australia. I have been interested in this subject for a long time. I recall that a newspaper, the name of which I have forgotten, used to organise days during the year when rural Australia met urban Australia and vice versa. This was an attempt to bridge what could be described as the occupation gap between the city and the country, as well as to give each of the 2 groups an appreciation of the other's point of view and approach to different subjects. Those days were very successful. They required considerable organisation and they were very expensive events.

The proposal from the ATIA is very simple. It has been very successful in Great Britain and Ireland. The article mentions the success of the Irish Tourist Board in selling its rural areas not only to Irish city people but also to overseas tourists. When tourists go to a country, myself included, their time is limited. Typically, hotel rooms do not vary very much whether one is in Barcelona, London or Copenhagen. The interior of a hotel room does not tell you much about where you are. There is a bed, carpet, curtains, television set, shower, toilet and the mirror on the wall. In order to see the differences between places, one has to go back to the basics and see how the ordinary people live, the peasants, the rural people or the farmers. These are the people who really count in any country and it is through them that one discovers the reality of a country.

The Australian states have already put in place programs which allow tourists from Australian cities and from overseas to visit farms and rural properties to appreciate a taste of real life. I have written already to the Minister for Tourism, the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries and the Minister for Industries and Development expressing my view that the Northern Territory government should actively consider a project along these lines. We should be selling the experience of our pastoral country, not only to our city people in the Northern Territory but to interstate and overseas visitors also.

People have attempted to do this from time to time in a patchy way. However, I do not believe that the government has given any encouragement to making this one of the major aspects of tourism development in the Northern Territory. It is more important now than ever before in view of the continuation of the pilots' dispute and the approach of the federal government in dealing with it. It says that there is no strike and no depreciation in the amount of air travel of which one can avail oneself, but those of us who live in the real world know that, not only has the pilots' dispute affected us as individuals in the community but, to a great degree, it has affected the tourist industry.

What is brought to mind immediately is an article that appeared in The Australian in relation to tourist operators in Alice Springs. I was very interested in this article because I know the lady involved. It has grieved me considerably to see that a small business operator may go to the wall as a result of a downturn in the tourist industry. The Minister for Tourism was mentioned in this article as being interested in this lady's case and also in the fate of other small tourist operators, many of whom could go to the wall because of the protracted nature of the pilots' dispute.

I hope that the Minister for Tourism, in particular, the Minister for Industries and Development and the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries will give consideration to a tourism program of major importance in the Northern Territory. We have much to offer, by way of rural interests, to those people who want to see some of the real country. I could elaborate further and say that I know that many Darwin people go for drives in the Litchfield Shire, in my electorate and in the electorate of the Minister for Industries and Development, in order to see something of the country close to Darwin. That indicates that even people in Darwin want to see a bit of real country life. They may not want to live like that, they may not want the challenges of country life continuously and they may not want to put up with the disadvantages of living in the country but, nevertheless, they want to see what that life is all about. I have had information passed to me at first-hand by people who visit our place frequently. As a consequence, I am developing a minor business in relation to what I regard as run-of-the-mill farming operations that members of my family undertake every day. People from the city enjoy coming to see how animals are tended and husbanded.

As a result of my personal experience and my knowledge of farming and pastoral people in other parts of the Territory, I believe there is a great opportunity for the Minister for Tourism and the other ministers that I mentioned. If they let this opportunity go by, it will indicate to me once again that this Northern Territory government does not really have the interests of agricultural development at heart. Not only would such a program benefit the tourism industry and assist in its rehabilitation, it would also assist the development of the agricultural and pastoral industries in the Northern Territory. Because these would be small, family-operated tourism ventures, the money that the tourists spent would remain in the Territory. That would contribute to the overall development of the Northern Territory and, more importantly, the money earned by these farmers and pastoralists would go towards agricultural development.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I rise to respond to the matters raised by the Leader of the Opposition this evening. He spoke about the trauma that apparently this unfortunate woman experienced as a consequence of a series of circumstances. Also, he raised a number of matters in relation to the Sexual Assault Referral Service that is available through the department and the hospital in particular. For the purposes of the record, I would like to clarify what we are doing, how the service will operate and how we will provide a 24-hour, on-call service in relation to rape counselling. I will deal then with issues relating to other forms of trauma counselling - I think that is an appropriate terminology - for families of murder victims and others faced with traumatic circumstances. I will indicate some current and potential directions that we are examining to deal with this extremely difficult matter.

I do not intend this to be an excuse. I believe the Leader of the Opposition recognises that, in the Northern Territory, we provide an exceptionally wide and comprehensive set of services, in most ways comparable to those available in cities of 2 and 3 million people. In the range of services available, we must recognise equally that we are dealing with a very small and scattered population and that our budgets are miniscule when compared to those of the states. It is exceptionally difficult to find the funds to enable us to do what we would wish to do. In a small community, often organisations are needed which can provide a range of services rather than a single specialist service. That is not meant to be an excuse. It is the reality of attempting to provide services within budget constraints.

I will refer to what we are doing in respect of the Sexual Assault Referral Service. It is true that we have had some difficulties in filling the vacancy. I do not wish to repeat the history of that except to say that the major difficulty was that we could not simply recruit somebody to be the sexual assault counsellor as a 1-person operation. That matter has been reviewed. There will be 2 positions and that will provide the possibility of shared workloads and responsibilities. The salary ranges have been increased to make the positions more attractive to a wider range of qualified and experienced counsellors. The Senior Social Worker at the Royal Darwin Hospital has been providing a limited counselling service to sexual assault victims since the resignation of the previous coordinator. In addition, victims of rape have the option of choosing or being referred to the Ruby-Gaea Centre Against Rape, which has been funded by the Department of Health and Community Services as a community-based service.

Following the review, a second counsellor is to be attached to the unit as the coordinator of the unit. Both positions are being advertised in the local and interstate press and in professional and college journals. The advertisements for these positions, at the Science 3 and Science 2 levels, will be appearing in the media in 2 to 3 weeks time, depending on advertising deadlines. It is proposed to locate these 2 positions in a special area on the ground floor of the Casuarina Plaza building, with a discrete entrance away from the other entrances to the building. Appropriate counselling rooms and facilities will be provided to ensure confidentiality and comfort for clients attending the unit. This unit is intended to provide follow-up counselling only, because a 24-hour, on-call medical service component will continue to be located at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Administrative support will be provided to the unit from the regional office.

To summarise, we will have 2 counsellors available for follow-up counselling and an on-call medical service will be available at the hospital on a 24-hour basis. Administrative support will be provided to the 2 counsellors through the counselling facility at the Casuarina Plaza building. This is dependent on the success of our efforts to recruit suitable persons. Given the creation of an extra position to enable the workload to be spread, and the upgrading of the classifications, we believe that we will be successful in recruiting to these positions. That is where we are going. I believe that that structure is practical. It is intended to provide the confidentiality and support service that is necessary, and it takes into account the inevitability of having to work within the constraints of budget. It fits in with other services such as the Ruby-Gaea centre and Crisis Line that are available to the community.

If a person goes to the hospital, I am advised that counselling is offered there and then. Social workers are available at the hospital to provide immediate counselling or the person may be referred to the Ruby-Gaea centre. Obviously, I have not been able to check and confirm the details of the case raised by the Leader of the Opposition. I will carry out an investigation into the specific circumstances of the case to determine whether the proper procedures were followed and, if so, why the system did not work. I will ensure that procedures and back-up are in place to prevent such an incident occurring again. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that the particular moment of trauma is when people are in most need of support and assistance. It is an extraordinarily traumatic circumstance for a woman to be faced with the invasion of her soul, let us say, associated with rape. Support mechanisms can be provided that can avoid many of the psychological side effects that can flow from such an event. I will do whatever I can to ensure that we provide adequate support services for women in that

circumstance, both medical and counselling, and as early as possible. I believe that the mechanism we have in place will overcome any difficulties that have occurred there. I will not deny that there has been that problem, but we are moving to remedy it and I believe that honourable members will accept that this is an appropriate direction to take.

I will move on to the issue of trauma counselling, as I have referred to it. This is an issue that is arising more and more. The Leader of the Opposition referred to a South Australian case. I have noted that, in relation to the Hoddle Street massacre and other such traumatic events, access to trauma counselling has been provided as soon as possible after the event. Departmental officers have advised me that, in respect of situations such as the horrific accident at the soccer stadium in England, if counselling is made available quickly, there will be fewer long-term psychological problems for the people involved. It is true that some people say that this is going over the top and that people should be able to stand on their own 2 feet. The reality is that many people cannot do that without such counselling. If support is provided on the spot, people are less likely to have problems later. There will be fewer problems later for those people and for the community.

There is an organisation in the Northern Territory called the Employee Assistance Scheme which operates as a support mechanism. It has union, employer and government representation. It has engaged recently in a couple of exercises in trauma counselling, in particular in relation to the balloon accident that occurred in Alice Springs. It provide counselling for the ambulance and police officers involved with that and it was quite a successful operation. It has also been involved in response to a couple of other incidents. We are not funding the scheme specifically at the moment and I will not pretend otherwise than that our budget is very thinly stretched. There are many more demands on money available through my department than we have dollars to meet. However, I certainly intend to explore the expansion of the activity of that organisation. It is a worthwhile function to provide support in relation to major traumatic events.

Other trauma counselling is provided by the social workers who are part of the hospital staff. There is a team of social workers attached to the hospital. They provide counselling for families and victims in the hospital. The hospital-based services go beyond merely doctors and nurses. The range of allied health professionals that is available, be they physiotherapists, social workers or other support personnel, is quite comprehensive. The trauma counselling that I am referring to is actually conducted away from a hospital situation. The workers would have to deal with disasters and provide support. Through those mechanisms, there is potential to develop trauma counselling both within the hospital system and outside in the general community. I think honourable members will accept that that is a creditable direction in which to be heading.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, last Friday evening, a freak wind and hail storm struck the farm area of Ti Tree in my electorate. On Saturday, I travelled there to inspect the damage and to see whether there was any assistance that I could provide. On the road down to Ian Dahlenburg's farm, the first thing I noticed was a demountable which could only be described as having been turned inside out. Further on, I noticed that the large fences that had been erected by the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries to protect the orange and the mango experimental areas against strong winds basically had been torn to shreds. The stays had been ripped off even though they had been welded on. They were a mangled mess. While it may not have

worked totally in this area, it may be worth the department looking at planting 'barna' grass as a replacement for those fairly expensive structures. The 'barna' grass that Ian Dahlenburg has further down came out very well. Even though it is only some 18 months old, it stood up very well to the winds.

Ian Dahlenburg and I went for a walk around the property and the damage was quite considerable. The first thing that he showed us was a very large, low-loader trailer which would have weighed many tonnes. It can be moved by a tractor in low-ratio first gear. The force of the winds had moved it from one side of the road and blown it some 40 ft up the road. If it had not been pulled up by a rise on the gutter, it would probably have kept on careering. That will give honourable members some idea of the force of the winds. At the time when we arrived, we thought that the winds had destroyed everything that he had in the ground. The sultana grapes, which were due to come on in a couple of weeks, were totally destroyed. All that he may be able to save are some of the rockmelons which are just about ready for picking. They have a special skin which does not evidence the force of hail quite so much. All the other crops were damaged incredibly by hail.

It will be another battle for Mr Dahlenburg. As everybody knows, he is the pioneer of the grape industry in central Australia. He has done a great amount of work over the years to develop farming in that area. This is a major setback for him. He hopes to be able to keep some cash flow going through what is left of the rockmelons. He has a major battle in front of him to get himself back on his feet. I know that he will do it. He is a battler from way back and he has come through great difficulties before.

I called on the member for Sadadeen. I am sure that honourable members will join with me in commiserating with him for the severe damage inflicted on his grapes. He was telling me earlier that, instead of a crop of some 55 t, he might be able to clear 3 t. This is only because of the excellent neighbourly work done by people from Territory Grapes, who came up next day and volunteered to help re-establish some of his terraces.

It was an incredible gale. People say that they have never known anything of that nature in that area. Everyone chipped in. I would like to commend Mike Arundell who went down and helped with re-establishing essential services at a time when lightning was still flashing. There was still quite a lot of danger. He gave everybody a hand to try to re-establish power in that area. I went on to Pmara Jutunta. Fortunately, the community had noticed that the storm was coming. Pastor Eric Pananka had been at Pine Hill and he had seen the storm in the distance. He raced home and was able to ensure that everybody was inside. Consequently, while they lost power to one of the houses and a number of trees were destroyed, nobody was seriously hurt and the damage was fairly light.

At Ti Tree itself, considerable wind damage was caused to trees and considerable danger was experienced. By that stage, the hail had stopped and therefore the damage was minor. I inspected some other communities there and fortunately they were quite okay. It will be a battle for the farmers in that area to re-establish themselves. I know they will do it. They are gamblers who take this sort of knock on the chin. They might be knocked down, but they will get up and battle back again. I offer my congratulations to them and also my commiserations for what they have suffered.

While I am on the subject of Ti Tree, I would like to raise once again the matter of the bus service to the Ti Tree school. I raised this matter on 23 May this year. I have written a series of letters to the minister since

that time. The government licenses a bus service which picks up the children at Anningie, Ti Tree Station, Pmara Jutunta and, originally, at Woola Downs. I have been arguing to have the service re-established to Woola Downs. The sorry business is over and people have moved back to that community.

Just coming back to the wind damage, honourable members may like to look at some photographs. The member for Sadadeen has some photographs that were taken before and after the storm which show the demountable and the incredible damage suffered to his crop as a result of the winds, which actually turned the steel posts at right angles to the ground. He mentioned to me that he was lucky that the storm did not happen a couple of days earlier, when it might have done far more damage. He would have lost all the panels and other equipment from the new coolroom which he is installing.

As I have said, the people at Woola Downs were offered a small allowance for their community's troop carrier. The allowance was to be at a rate below that paid to public servants for each kilometre travelled and it was totally inadequate. I think that we need to consider again the general community bus service. The point is that the bus service operating at Ti Tree is completely inadequate. It is below standard. It runs late, the buses break down and the fumes in the vehicles make the children sick. Those buses must be about 30 years old. I am certain that the contract specified that the buses were to be equipped with spare tyres, tools, and drinking water for the children in case of a breakdown, and that they were to be kept in a reasonable standard of repair. I recall being told at one stage that there was supposed to be provision for an additional bus as a standby in case the others broke down. In fact, there was supposed to be provision for some maintenance facilities at Ti Tree to keep the buses on the road. None of that is occurring. The buses are constantly off the road. Registration of them has been refused time and time again and the situation is outrageous.

I wrote to the honourable minister about this some months ago. He must have the matter investigated and, if the contractors will not pull up their socks, he should revoke the contract and give it to the people who had it originally, or get together another group in the Ti Tree area, hopefully a community group such as the school council or the progress association, to provide a decent bus service. The current service is an absolute disgrace. The drivers are doing their best but the state of the equipment, the lack of maintenance facilities and the lack of simple things like tools and spare tyres is absolutely outrageous. Sooner or later, a vehicle will be stranded and kids will be left for hours in the middle of the day without water. It is not good enough. The operators are being paid a reasonable amount to run this bus service and they seem to have decided that they can cut corners. Possibly, they did not tender for enough in the first place. However, that is their problem. They should get out rather than continue to provide the absolutely hopeless and inadequate service that they are providing at the moment.

Whilst on the subject of bus services, I would like to mention the bus service from Pine Creek. Apparently, there is a bus service which takes Years 9, 10, 11 and 12 students on the 90 km journey to Katherine each day. I have been told that that bus service is to be withdrawn and I believe that would be a most inappropriate move at this stage. I have been told also that the Pine Creek Council is keen to take on the provision of the service but is not in a position to do so at the moment. It has to get its act together. It has to work up a contract, call for submissions and work out how it could provide the service. It would be a real shame if the current bus service was withdrawn until such time as the Pine Creek Council and the local community

can deal with the matter and keep transporting the students to school in Katherine every day.

I believe that the Ministers for Transport and Works and Education are conducting a review of bus services. I hope that the review will overcome the problems to which I have referred. However, the Pine Creek and Ti Tree situations need to be addressed now. They cannot be allowed to drift whilst awaiting the outcome of some long-winded bureaucratic review. These are issues which must be addressed immediately, and solved. I urge the honourable ministers to take them on board.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, about a fortnight ago, I received a letter which other members of this Assembly would have received. I understand that it was to be sent to all members of parliament throughout Australia. The letter drew my attention to a Bill of Rights of the Child which is apparently before the United Nations. As the writer of the letter understood it, the bill was to be passed on 20 November. It would give children the right to see whatever they like, to do whatever they like and to say whatever they like. If parents tried even mild forms of discipline, children would have the right to report them to the authorities to be dealt with. That sounds pretty far-fetched, but I have not heard anything to the contrary. I am working with Senator Tambling to get to the truth of this matter. Apparently, another provision states that children would have to be informed of their rights by their school teachers.

I believe that the writer of the letter is doing the nation a service by bringing this possible scenario to the attention of members of parliament. She did not say that the Declaration of the Rights of the Child should be denounced outright, but she did say that, under our arrangements with the United Nations and with Australia being a signatory to United Nations agreements, all this could be foisted on the people of Australia without their knowledge, simply by the signature of Senator Gareth Evans being applied to a document. She was most concerned that the media had seemed to refuse to pick up this issue. I suggested in my reply that she try to get on to the John Laws show, because he seems to take the bull by the horns in respect of matters such as this. She was appalled at the thought that this declaration could be imposed on Australia without debate in the media and, more particularly, without debate in the federal parliament.

I was certainly blissfully unaware of this proposition. If it is found to be untrue, no doubt I will have some egg on my face. However, I have taken the writer of the letter at her word and have been working on the subject with Senator Tambling. I requested him today to chase the matter up to find out what has happened in the United Nations. I believe that our founding fathers would turn in their graves if the claims are true and our sovereignty is being eroded further by a use of the external powers of this country in a manner which was never envisaged.

I do not believe that the people of Australia would accept such propositions as are stated in the letter. Certainly, none of us want to see children abused physically, sexually or in any other way. They need protection in that way. However, the terms of the declaration, as stated in the letter, are simply a recipe for anarchy. I have often said that children of parents who take the effort to apply discipline have a psychological understanding that their parents care about them and are concerned about their welfare. I say that, if you do not discipline your children, you do not love them. It is so easy to sling them \$5 and tell them to get out of your hair. The caring parent, who is prepared to discipline a child and say no to this,



that and the other, needs our support and encouragement. This is not the last occasion on which I will be raising this matter. As I find out more, I will certainly keep the House informed. I believe that every one of us should be horrified at the thought that Senator Evans could sign a document which would be binding on us without our knowledge and without debate. That is a totally undesirable situation.

I would like to comment also on the Leader of the Opposition's remarks this afternoon. He made many good points. I am concerned about the situation of victims of crime in relation to perpetrators or alleged perpetrators. Of course, the actual perpetrator must be determined through the processes of the court. In relation to major crimes, I believe there should be mandatory detention of the alleged perpetrator. The victim should be informed and not left to wonder whether his or her attacker is still at large and likely to commit another offence, as no doubt occurs on many occasions. I recall a recent case in Alice Springs in which a Filipino woman was attacked by the former wife of her husband. The offender has been convicted and sentenced to jail. However, other people were involved. They were living in fear and desperately wanted to know whether the perpetrator of the crime had been caught. I believe that we must do whatever we can to alleviate such fears by informing people when alleged perpetrators are caught and informing them of the outcomes of court proceedings so that they do not have to live in fear. Sometimes the perpetrators are let off. I recall the case of 2 German girl tourists who were attacked south of Alice Springs by 4 youths and they had to stay in Alice Springs and move around the streets. These 4 fellows were released on bail and the magistrate commented that the girls were actually confronting their attackers in the street. I think that is a pretty horrendous situation.

As the member for Stuart said, Ti Tree experienced what was virtually a mini-cyclone. It lasted for half-an-hour on Friday afternoon and did considerable damage. I estimate that winds in excess of 160 km/h were experienced and these were accompanied by a considerable downpour and, for 2 or 3 minutes, a hailstorm which inflicted the major damage on the crops in the area. I was very disappointed because we had hoped to start harvesting the grapes 12 hours later at 6 o'clock the following morning. To have had the crop virtually wiped out is rather a kick in the teeth. To make matters worse, I had hoped also to start harvesting the first commercial nectarine crop that the Territory has produced. Unfortunately, the nectarines took a fair hammering. Nevertheless, I will survive. I have worked out how I can cover my financial problems and, this time next year, I expect to be in a considerably better position than I am in at the moment.

I would reiterate that, for people like Ian Dahlenburg, who have spent many years pioneering the work in the Territory and who do not have a second source of income to support them, this is pretty devastating. They are pretty tough people and they certainly are not crying and whingeing or hoping for big handouts from the government. But, when you put in a year's work - and I know Ian works 6½ days a week and some 10 hours a day - and you see your year's work devastated in half-an-hour, it is very discouraging. He is bearing up pretty well, but I would appeal to the minister that, if it is at all possible, he should assist them in some way and give them some encouragement to bounce back, roll up the sleeves and have another go. I am sure that people would see that as being a fair and decent thing. No doubt, any proposition that he had would need to go to Cabinet. I would like to place on the public record my assurance that I will not be seeking any assistance. I assure Cabinet members that they should not be deterred from providing any possible assistance to the Dahlenburgs because of my own position.

I would like to pay tribute also to the people at Pine Hill. Eric Biggs was a man whom I had never met until Saturday afternoon. He had been in Tennant Creek, heard about the storm and dropped in to see Ian Dahlenburg. Ian brought him down to see me. He commiserated with us and examined the 2000-odd steel star pickets which make up the trellis system and which had been bent by the winds. He said that he had a work force at Pine Hill which could do nothing because it was raining at his property and possibly causing considerable damage to his crops. Whilst making no promises, he said that he would approach them to come over and see what could be done. At 9.30 on Sunday morning, he arrived with 9 others. In 4 hours, we physically straightened all the pickets. That was a tremendous boost to the morale. Given the weight of the grapes, there is no way that a single person could have straightened those pickets and I am certainly not in a position where I could rush out and employ a group of people to help me do it.

That is neighbourliness of the highest order and I would like to put on the public record my appreciation of the sheer decency of those chaps. They worked with an absolute will. I made pancakes for morning tea but their ladies brought lunch over and cleaned up the place afterwards. It is those little acts which are really appreciated, as were the phone calls I received from the member for Barkly and the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. The member for Stuart called in and offered his commiserations and that was well appreciated in the circumstances. As I said, we will bounce back and, next year, as all farmers learn to say, we hope things will be much better. I suppose we should commiserate with the taxman too because he will not get much of a slice.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I thought it appropriate for me to comment this evening on the Jingili electorate's win in the Territory Tidy Towns Competition. A function was held last Friday evening at the hospital laundry at which all of the winners were announced. On behalf of my constituents, I am delighted that Jingili came up tops this time round. Not only did the electorate win the overall prize for the Territory's tidiest town, it also won the first prize in category C. That is indeed very pleasing because, a couple of years ago, the Jingili electorate came second in that particular category. The fact that the electorate has now won confirms that the team effort that we have had going there for some 5 years has really paid off. Most electorates and towns form committees and those committees formulate plans and programs to try to beautify their area. We did this in 1985 and we have been working steadily ever since. I am pleased to say that, over that period, we have had extensive tree plantings of nature strips and all of the council parks. It is very pleasing to see that many of the trees that were planted in 1985 are now 2 m or 3 m tall.

However, the win contributed to not only by the work done by the Territory Tidy Towns Committee, but greatly by the efforts of the primary schools and the preschools in the electorate. I am very pleased indeed to say that all 3 schools - Jingili, Moil and Wagaman - are highly conscious environmentally and have themselves undertaken extensive tree planting programs. Those programs for the school grounds have been undertaken progressively by the school councils or the parent associations. About 3 weeks ago, I was at Jingili Preschool and 20 to 25 parents were there. On that Saturday morning, we planted an entire palm garden comprising up to 50 palms and other plants.

What I am saying is that this is a community effort. It is not simply the Jingili electorate Territory Tidy Towns Committee carrying out its program. It involves not only the schools and the committee but the constituents as well. It is catching. When people see that their electorate is being

beautified and that people are caring for their nature strips and gardens, a certain amount of competition develops. If your neighbour has a nice garden, you too would like to have a nice garden. I think that it is infectious, and that concern for the environment and for beautifying the electorate came to fruition last Friday evening. During Arbor Week, I contacted my 3 primary schools and offered to donate a tree to each. I said that, if they had their gardener dig a hole, I would bring the tree along and speak to the children about Arbor Week and about the need to preserve the environment. All the schools agreed and we undertook those 3 little projects. The children were absolutely delighted. It is amazing the number of children who have come up to me in the street, outside the shopping centre or outside my office or wherever, and commented on that, saying: 'I was at the school when you came to plant the tree'. That has made quite a deep impression on those children and I intend to do the same again during each Arbor Week. It is very important.

I would like to compliment the Keep Australia Beautiful Council and, of course, Territory Tidy Towns, for the excellent way in which they undertook the project this year and in years past. It has made a significant difference to the Northern Territory. Let us cast our minds back 10 years or more ago, to the time prior to self-government, when the Territory was a very untidy place. Rubbish was everywhere. There were beer cans along the side of most major arterial roads. In fact, I know the Department of Transport and Works used to let a contract for the cleaning up of the Stuart Highway between the airport gates and the Berry Springs turnoff, and I recall that the Boy Scouts were successful in obtaining that contract. Some \$3000 or \$4000 was offered for them to undertake that massive project. You would not believe the number of 5 t truckloads of beer cans and other debris that were collected and carted to the rubbish dump. I do not think that is done these days because I believe that the majority of people in Territory communities are now very much aware of the need to beautify their townships and to ensure that they are not spoiled by rubbish.

Before closing, I would like to compliment and thank my Territory Tidy Towns Committee in the Jingili electorate, and the schools and the constituents at large for their contribution to the achievement of this wonderful win last Friday evening. I can assure all the other townships and electorates within the Northern Territory that they will find Jingili electorate very hard to beat next year.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to address the matter of compensation for barramundi fishermen in the Northern Territory. This is an ongoing episode and, given the discussions over the last several months, I would have thought that perhaps it was nearing some resolution, but that does not appear to be the case. For the last 10 years, the Territory government has spent considerable time, money and effort removing the latent effort from the fishery. In that exercise, various rates of compensation have been paid for licences and nets and, over the last year or 2, the government has moved to close off rivers as a part of the program and as an additional incentive to fishermen to bail out of the industry.

Earlier this year, we had a situation where the minister had anticipated the surrender of, and payment for, 5 to 8 licences. For various reasons, this did not eventuate. He proceeded with the closure of some rivers and that drew a certain amount of flak in the community. However, I think the bottom line in all this is that the latent effort has gone out of the fishery and, by 'latent', I mean the casual fisherman and the part-time pastoralist who were doing a bit of fishing on the side - those people who used the barramundi

industry to supplement their income in some way. What we have left in the fishery is the hard doers, those people whose livelihood is almost entirely dependent on fishing, those people who have been in the industry a long time and those people who have most of their lifelong commitment involved in the operation of the commercial fishery.

We are now moving into a new phase where we are transferring the fishery resource from the commercial fisherman into the hands of the recreational fisherman, and that process will increase as the years go on. I do not say that there is anything particularly wrong with that, but the best guess would indicate that at least another 15 commercial licences will have to be cancelled before the government achieves the sort of balance which it is looking for and before the resource is able to provide those left in the industry with the sort of reasonable living which they should be able to expect. The bottom line is that the present rules are simply not working. They were satisfactory in terms of taking out the latent effort in the fishery but they are certainly not taking out the hard doers and the committed commercial fishermen who cannot leave the fishery or do not want to leave it for some reason.

Mr Speaker, it is obvious that fisherman will not take up the buy-back scheme. There is a range of reasons for that. It is also obvious that some fishermen are using the scheme as a system of financing the purchase of additional licences and nets. I believe that the commercial fishermen have written to the minister about that in recent days, particularly in relation to the Simolesa family and the way it has been able to use the existing buy-back system and the formula to sell a licence which it already had and to use the proceeds to finance the purchase of another half licence and half quota. The commercial fishermen say that what is good for the goose is good for the gander and, if that family can get away with it, why shouldn't everybody else be able to? That would seem to be a reasonable view if one were a commercial fisherman looking to leave the fishery whilst obtaining compensation for one's entitlement and licence.

Without going into detail about the settlements for various fishermen, I would like to put to the minister again the proposition that an independent arbiter be appointed. It could be a magistrate or a judge. It needs to be somebody outside government who could take into account the special circumstances relating to the situation of fishermen who remain in the fishery. We are talking about people who have been in the fishery for a long time and have made a heavy commitment in terms of their life's work and capital outlay. These people do not see a great range of opportunities awaiting them when they leave the fishery, whenever that might be. I am not talking about people who are lazy, but some of them feel that they are a bit late in their years to start taking computer courses or doing other things which might provide them with an opportunity for alternative employment. In setting up a judicial arbitration system, the minister might like to give thought to some of the following points, which I think are valid. Certainly, the fishermen believe them to be worthy of reasonable consideration.

The first matter relates to the amount paid for a licence. Any licence which has changed hands in the last couple of years could have been sold for between \$80 000 and \$200 000. A licence that was purchased 10 or 20 years ago could have been bought for about \$8000. That sort of difference needs to be taken into account. The annual effort of each fisherman is an important aspect which should be taken into account by anybody determining a fisherman's entitlement. If a fisherman has been working for a couple of weeks a year, his compensation must surely differ from that received by a fisherman who has

been working for most of the barramundi season and earning the majority of his income from it.

Compensation for equipment is an important consideration and one that does not come into the formula now. The minister and his officers might say that that is just tough luck. However, the reality is that, when a fisherman goes out of the fishery in the present circumstances, he may be stuck with boats, which have no commercial value unless he sells them for peanuts at the Winnellie auctions. Such items may have no value in the fisherman's yard or in any future employment, but they are certainly worth something. That should be taken into consideration.

Another important consideration is the percentage of income that the fisherman has derived from his barramundi-fishing activities over a period of years. If it can be shown that a fisherman derived his entire income from the barramundi fishery for the last 3, 5, 7 or 10 years, in my view he would be entitled to a different sort of compensation to that payable to someone who has taken a percentage of his income from the barramundi fishery without putting in as much effort as others have done.

Another important criterion is the potential ability of fishermen to gain future employment. Some fishermen in the industry are between 20 and 30 years of age. They have not been in it for very long. They have other credentials and are mobile, with the ability to enter other forms of employment. On the other hand, some fishermen have been in the industry for as many as 22 years. They are getting on in life. They have mortgages, children in high school and a whole range of commitments. When they bail out of the fishery, their future prospects are a little different to those of other commercial fishermen. That might seem superfluous or irrelevant in terms of determining compensation levels but, in my view, many of these men have been pioneers and have committed almost half their life's work to the development of the fishery. They ought not to be simply cast aside and disregarded as though they were unimportant.

I raise these points with the minister because it is very unfortunate that the Northern Territory is seen to be taking fishermen out of the industry in a way that is most undignified and unfair to some people who have been involved for a long time. Mr Speaker, I know from my own experience, as you would also know, that many commercial barramundi fishermen are regarded as rogues of the first order. Whilst there may be some evidence to support that contention, others are very honourable gentlemen who can see that there is a need for them to move to other things and would like to do it with some dignity. I again put this proposition to the minister in the hope that his continuing discussions with the industry might bring about some resolution which accommodates the fishermen and is acceptable to the government.

Mr Speaker, on a final note tonight, I would like to indicate to the minister that I had the opportunity last week to attend the DPP field day at McArthur River. It was a pity that the minister could not attend because he would have gained a great deal from it. Most of the 50 to 70 people who attended thought that it was an excellent day. A considerable amount of information was made available to them on a wide range of matters.

I have written already to the minister about the matter which I wish to raise with him. It concerns the access for cattlemen in the Gulf area who have traditionally sent their stores into Queensland and who now find that, after the end of December this year, they will not have access to the Queensland market for their stores. Herein is the sting, and it has been

coming for a long time. Some cattlemen, who have been working very hard to have their properties declared provisionally clean, have reached that status. They find now that, if they are in a destocking or disease-control area, and I particularly cite the case of McArthur River Station, the Queensland authorities intend apparently to deny them access to truck into Queensland. If that is the case, it is a most serious restriction on cattlemen and there must be others who are likely to be caught in similar circumstances as the BTEC program grinds into its final stages. This might be just one station in one area but, if this is the case, something needs to be done and some statement needs to be made so that other people in the industry know exactly where they stand.

As the Manager of McArthur River Station pointed out, he has spent \$300 000 or more, plus all the government and the beef industry money, on becoming provisionally clean. He now finds that, because he is surrounded by properties which are not clean, he is in a very difficult position and may not be able to truck his cattle into Queensland. As the minister would know, the viability of the operation depends almost entirely on breeding the cattle on McArthur River Station and fattening them in another place. If the manager is told that he cannot fatten the stock in another place, the economics of the operation will deteriorate considerably.

I ask the minister to address this matter at question time tomorrow, this evening in the adjournment debate or at some other time during these sittings and give an indication of what is likely to happen. That would be of great help to those people who can see themselves being bottled in and put at a disadvantage. If the minister had been at the field day, perhaps this matter could have been addressed on the spot because his officers were unable to address it. Maybe it needs a political solution or maybe it can be settled in some other way. Certainly, we cannot allow a situation where people in the circumstances of McArthur River Station are precluded from transporting their animals into Queensland at this time.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, first, I will address the second point raised by the member for Barkly in relation to McArthur River Station. He is correct in saying that I was not there last week, but I think he underestimates the ability of officers of my department to address questions. This issue was raised with officers of the department and it is my understanding that the Manager of McArthur River Station indicated his understanding of the Territory's position in relation to this problem. It is a serious issue that I have raised a number of times in the Assembly and in the media in relation to the BTEC program. It is a great pity that the member for Stuart is not here tonight because these circumstances illustrate clearly some of the problems that we face with the BTEC program. On a number of occasions, the member for Stuart has called for a cessation to the program or deferrals for certain properties. The unfortunate consequence of those types of actions would be to delay further the movement northward of different classifications of disease status.

McArthur River Station is presently in an eradication area. The Queensland authorities plan to declare that state impending free from 1 January 1990. The member for Barkly is correct when he says that, under those circumstances, the movement of cattle to Queensland from places like McArthur River Station or other properties in an eradication area would be restricted. Those are the very circumstances that I have illustrated over the last year or so. If we do not continue to proceed with the BTEC program, we will face these problems. They may well have serious implications for cattle producers and serious implications for the Northern Territory.

The position as it relates to McArthur River Station and other properties in the eradication area in the north is that, barring unforeseen difficulties such as breakdowns, it is intended that the line movement be declared by the National BTEC Committee at its meeting on 11 December 1989 - that is, movement of the line north whereby McArthur River Station and other stations in that area will be in a provisionally free area. That submission will go to the National BTEC Committee on 11 December along with the Queensland proposal to declare Queensland impending free. Under present circumstances, we are confident that, unless there is something major like a breakdown, the line will move northward and cattle movement from McArthur River to Queensland will be permissible. There will be testing requirements, but at least they will be able to move cattle, which is not the case at present. It is a very good illustration of some of the difficulties that we face. We are very mindful of the need to keep progressing the BTEC program so that the line can move forward. There is continual progress with our overall disease status and more and more properties will be included in the impending free and provisionally free areas and will have access to the very important southern markets.

I would like to touch on a couple of points that the member for Barkly raised in relation to the barramundi buy-back scheme. I have covered most of them in the press and therefore I will not go through all of the issues. I think it is fair to indicate that, in the last 12 months, the member for Barkly has oscillated all over the place in relation to the barramundi buy-back scheme and recreational fishing. He came out very strongly in opposition to the closure of the Daly and Mary River systems when these were announced in December last year, only to back off fairly promptly when there was a very strong media campaign in support of it from recreational fishing clubs and recreational fishing people. That all died down.

If we cast our minds back to the Wanguri by-election, point 17 of the famous 21-point plan of the member for Barkly came out very strongly in favour of recreational fishing. The Territory Nationals would do all sorts of marvellous things to promote recreational fishing. Of course, the barramundi buy-back scheme did not get much of a mention, nor did commercial fishing. Since then, in recent weeks, the member for Barkly has done another somersault and is pushing the cause of commercial fishing again, somewhat to the detriment of recreational fishing. The position is that we are not trying to eliminate commercial fishing. We are trying to strike a better balance between amateur fishing and commercial fishermen as regards access to the barramundi resource and the long-term management of the resource.

I would like to mention points that have been made by myself and others in the media. Many of the licences were applied - and I agree that it was a long while ago - at no cost. Since that time, there has been recognition of a considerable commitment on behalf of commercial fishermen in relation to their gear. The other point is that it has been recognised throughout Australia that this buy-back scheme is a very generous one. It has been funded totally by the Northern Territory government to an amount of \$2m. It is unique among buy-back schemes inasmuch as it is totally funded by the government. Normally, the practice with buy-back schemes is that they are funded partly by government but with a contribution from the industry. That does not apply in this case. If it did, that would effectively devalue the amounts which fishermen would be entitled to inasmuch as those remaining in the industry would have to pay for the scheme over a period of years. In fact, that is how the previous buy-back scheme worked. There is a contribution made by fishermen currently in the industry towards the previous buy-back scheme. This one is totally funded by government. It is a very equitable scheme and has been recognised as such nationally in some strange quarters, given that

the federal government recognises it as such and considers the plan to be a very responsible one.

I ask the member for Barkly to take some of those matters into account. I have responded to the other issues that he raised on a number of occasions through the media, and I do not want to repeat my comments here. We are continuing to pursue a resolution in relation to the buy-back of licences in order to reduce the total number of licences to 20, as well as to redistribute the access to our natural barramundi stocks and to ensure that a responsible and effective management scheme is in place. The other point which needs to be recognised is that, in dollar terms, the commercial fishing industry is worth a little over \$2m to the Northern Territory, whereas estimates of the value of recreational fishing put it at something in the order of \$60m. More important than that is the value which Territorians place on barramundi fishing as a recreational pursuit. The game-fishing aspect is also gaining incredible recognition, both nationally and internationally. We are receiving requests, on a very regular basis, for information in relation to our game fishing. Furthermore, as I indicated in my statement on the fishing industry during the last sittings, we are achieving national recognition for our efforts in protecting barramundi stocks and promoting opportunities for recreational fishing.

In conclusion, I indicate that I will take the honourable member's concerns on board. In so doing, I advise that we are continuing to consult with the industry and I am confident that we will find a resolution to the problem and achieve our goals. I hope that will ensure that our resource is protected and that it is equitably accessible to all.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.



Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

MOTION  
Censure of Minister for Education

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

- (1) censure the Minister for Education, Mr Harris:
  - (a) for having proved his incapacity to direct and control the head of his department in that he has been unable to prevent the head of his department from deliberately and openly countermanding ministerial decisions announced in this Assembly;
  - (b) for having failed to exercise the authority vested in him to direct policy; and
  - (c) for having failed to defend schools, teachers and parents who are subject to outrageous, ignorant and unjustified public attacks; and
- (2) call on the minister to resign forthwith.

Mr Speaker, let me make quite clear what this censure motion is all about. The Department of Education is not under the control of this parliament. We have a minister charged with the responsibility of running the ministry of education. He is not doing so and has demonstrated that he cannot do so. We have placed an extremely important portfolio in the hands of a man who is unable to exert control over the functions of his department. He is unable to ensure that the Secretary of the Department of Education follows his directions. The minister makes policy, but he is unable to ensure that it is carried out. His failure to take control of his portfolio is so embarrassing that he has become the subject of ridicule by those who are supposed to provide him with some element of loyalty.

Mr Speaker, let us look at the latest instance. In response to my question yesterday, the honourable minister informed this House: (a) that he had met with the Chairman of the Sanderson High School Council and the Principal the day before and was satisfied that the school encourages continuity of access; (b) that the school met the time requirements; and (c) that the school's timetable would not be upset. He did give us an insight into the fact that that statement must have resulted from a bit of blue with the secretary, because he said: 'I have defended Sanderson High School in relation to the timetable that it has on offer'. Excellent, Mr Speaker, excellent. He finished by saying that he and the school council had reached agreement on what he and the government wanted in relation to timetabling, that the timetable would be the one that is currently operating at the school and that he would not affect it. Finally, Mr Speaker, and honourable members can check this in Hansard, this is how the minister's response concluded: 'All I ask and all the government asks is that there is access to continuity, and that will continue'. The minister had spoken.

Let us put the best possible construction for the minister on this whole incredible saga. Let us have a look at what happened, but let us do so in a way that enables us to put the best construction possible on it for the minister. Let us put the possibility that the whole matter actually got out of hand weeks prior to this when the minister's wants were misconstrued. Let

us trace that through and see how it stands up. From the Education Act, we know that the Board of Studies is purely an advisory body to the Secretary of the Department of Education. The secretary, we are told, is in the habit of providing parameters and stipulations to the Board of Studies. The Chairman of the Board of Studies, Dr Harry Payne, made this quite clear in a letter to the NT News of 16 October in which he stated: 'The particular issue which has generated considerable debate is whether students should be required to study English and mathematics in every term during the compulsory years. This requirement actually emerged as a stipulation by the secretary in ongoing discussions about the progress of the review'. The board knew that that was ridiculous.

Dr Payne even suggested to Sanderson High School that it devise courses which could be labelled legitimately as English or maths but which took heed of students' interests. Mr Speaker, I have a letter here. Strangely, it is dated 12 October 1898. That may be a Freudian slip which relates to where education is headed at the moment, but I presume that it was actually supposed to read 12 October 1989. This letter comes from Dr Payne. He points out that the board is only advisory to the secretary, who has made some parameters clear. Dr Payne says that the secretary had 'reacted' a compromise - and he means 'reached' a compromise - with the board, which accepted that the continuous time allocation should apply to only 2 subjects, English and maths. Dr Payne then proceeds to show how ridiculous this matter is and how little support the board has for this proposal. His letter says: 'After all, it should be possible to devise courses which can legitimately be labelled English or maths but which do take heed of student interest. There is, for example, a literature of music'. Wait for this one, Mr Speaker. He also refers to 'a mathematics of music'. He proposed that as a method of getting around the requirements that the secretary was placing on the Board of Studies whilst continuing to deliver a well-recognised program which would allow the children at Sanderson to continue their previous approach without contravening the form of words put forward by the secretary. Mr Speaker, what a farce! The Board of Studies is twisting itself into knots in its effort to fit the secretary's stipulations.

The secondary schools are not having a bar of it. Many of them had written already to the Board of Studies advising it that they disagreed very strongly with the proposals. The whole issue was blown up in the press. Sanderson High School won the public debate very clearly. With commendable clarity, it demonstrated its aims and achievements under the system of vertical timetabling and showed why it had adopted its approach and why the whole thing was working. I must pay tribute to the Sanderson High School Council and to the people who wrote letters to the editor of the NT News. They were able to take a very complex subject, which is very difficult to comprehend, and to put it in words which would allow the public to understand exactly what was occurring.

To return to the minister, he had been out bush for much of this time, and we will come to what he was doing there later. He returned to turmoil. A public debate was raging. There was a public meeting out at Sanderson which, of course, he did not attend. Nor did any of the other CLP members who were invited.

Mr Finch: It is a pity that you cannot keep your political nonsense out of education. Why don't you think about the kids for a change?

Mr EDE: The minister did not turn up to that meeting. After ducking the issue for a few days, he met with the chairman of the school council and the

principal on Monday. The minister spotted where things had gone wrong - and remember, Mr Speaker, that we are putting forward the best scenario for the minister - and stated that he wanted simply to ensure that students had access to maths and English each term. That is something which I think we would all support.

Mr Harris: Yes. It is a pity that you did not get up and say it.

Mr EDE: However, the secretary had gone further. He misconstrued what the minister was saying. Whereas the minister had wanted access every term, the secretary went further and said that, irrespective of the fact that students might be way over the minimum requirement, they must study those 2 subjects. He would not allow a student who might be well ahead in English to put it aside for 10 weeks to concentrate on bringing his or her maths up to standard. However, having spoken to the chairman of the school council and the principal, the minister came in here and announced his policies. He said that access was the key issue and that Sanderson High School would be allowed to continue along the way it had been going.

Mr Speaker, that sounds reasonable, as a scenario, and that should have been the end of it. The secretary, suitably chastened, should have resolved to follow more closely the minister's directions and possibly the minister could have resolved to make himself rather clearer in the future. But it did not end there. The secretary was not prepared to take that lying down. He was not going to accept the word of the honourable minister, given to this Assembly and broadcast over radio from here. He would not accept the minister's statement, which I referred to earlier and which indicated that, having met with the school council, he was satisfied about the way the school encourages continuity of access, that there is access in every term to those subjects, that the school meets the minimum timetable requirements and that the timetable will not be upset. The secretary would not accept that. He would not take that lying down. So, what did he do? Because the minister makes his position clear, the secretary gets up and sends out word that the minister had his brief wrong. The minister had his brief wrong. In effect, he was saying: 'Here is this minister. I give him something to read out. I tell him what to say in the Assembly. I put it all down in words of one syllable - and he gets it wrong'. What an outrageous statement. What an outrageous position to put the minister in. Isn't that incredible, Mr Speaker. The minister got his brief wrong!

Mr Speaker, who is this man? Who is this secretary, who would dare to make a statement like that about his own minister? And what an outrageous statement it was. 'He had his brief wrong'. The secretary said that he was to be the one to decide. The secretary would not allow the honourable minister to make decisions on matters of such importance. No way would he allow the minister to put his head up and try to control something to do with policy. The secretary said that he was to be the one to decide, not the minister, and he went further than that. He went on to say that the fight was not over yet and that, regardless of what the minister said - what have we got here, Mr Speaker? Regardless of what the minister said in this Assembly, as far as the secretary was concerned the matter of programming at Sanderson High School had not been resolved. What an outrageous position for a secretary of a department to take. It should have resulted in his immediate dismissal.

How can the system operate when ministers are in this place laying down policy and instructions for their departments and their departmental secretaries are outside saying, 'Regardless of what my minister says, listen to me'.

Mr Coulter: According to you, a person who believes in blue cows.

Mr EDE: According to me?

Mr Coulter: Yes.

Mr EDE: Not just according to me.

Mr Coulter: Well, that is what we are being told here today.

Mr EDE: According to me?

Mr Coulter: Yes.

Mr EDE: Let us have a look, Mr Speaker. Let us not make it according to me. Let us make it according to the people who received the instruction. Let us make it according to the Sanderson High School Council. Mr Speaker, do not take my word for it.

A member: No, we would not.

Mr EDE: Would you take the word of the Sanderson High School Council? Would you take their word, Mr Speaker?

Mr Coulter: Develop your argument ...

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: Or are you going to find another excuse?

A member: No, no.

Mr EDE: You are going our way? All right then, sit back down there, keep quiet and think up another excuse for taking no action.

Mr Speaker, I have here the text of a letter from the Chairman of the Sanderson High School Council Incorporated to Hon Tom Harris MLA, Minister for Education, and it is dated with yesterday's date.

Dear Minister

It is with urgency and great concern that I write to you. On Monday afternoon at a meeting with the Principal of Sanderson High School and me, and again in the House today, you made statements and gave assurances regarding 'access to continuity' and no change to Sanderson's timetable. Despite this, it would appear high schools including Sanderson High School are receiving different information from the Secretary of the Education Department. It would appear that officers in Territory high schools were contacted by a senior departmental officer who, in reference to your statements in the House today, made the following clarifying points ...

Mr Poole: Will you table that document?

Mr EDE: I am quite happy to table this letter.

1. that you were briefed and in addition to seeking guarantees about 'access to continuity' you should also have pointed out that the

secretary of the department, as the Executive Officer, reserved the right to identify those students who must study maths and English continuously; ...

Mr Coulter: Who said that?

Mr McCarthy: The school council chairman.

Mr Coulter: The school council chairman?

Mr EDE: No. This was the message that was quoted to them.

Mr Coulter: Well, table it and circulate it so that we can read it.

Mr EDE: ...

2. that your assurance that the Sanderson timetable 'will not be upset' and that your government 'will not affect their timetable' should have contained qualifications which would have made your statement read 'there will be no major changes in Sanderson's timetable'; and
3. that there has been no backdown and that as far as the secretary was concerned the matter had not been resolved.

It is clear to me as Chairman of the Sanderson High School Council ...

Mr Coulter: Table it now.

Mr EDE: Wait for it.

... that, if the secretary's position on this matter as indicated by his 'clarification' of your assurances and statements in the House, is allowed to stand, then it will amount to a complete reversal of your position and the government's position as outlined to me at our meeting in the Chan Building at 4 o'clock Monday afternoon this week and of your policy as stated in the House and as reported in Hansard and the media.

I take the liberty of quoting again from your reported statement to the House:

I hope that parents of students attending Sanderson High School acknowledge that we will not affect their timetable. Their timetable will continue. All I ask and all the government asks is that there is access to continuity, and that will continue'.

I seek your urgent response to this most confusing and disturbing matter.

Yours sincerely,  
J.W. Vandenberg.  
Sanderson High School Council Inc.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the document.

Leave granted.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, there we have it. Let us not talk any longer about credibility.

One thing is quite clear: Geoff Spring must go. He must not be transferred to another department or tucked away in a special projects section. He must go. The shame of it is that, in his battle with the minister, the secretary has won. He countermanded the policy which the minister laid down clearly in the House. He went to principals saying that, regardless of what the minister had said, the minister got his brief wrong, the minister had strayed outside the secretary's control but, regardless of that, they were to follow his instructions and not the policy guidelines laid down by the Minister for Education in this House. The problem is that the minister climbed down. He has laid himself down on the carpet and he has allowed the secretary to walk all over him.

Mr Speaker, I am very genuinely sorry about this. I believe that, basically, the honourable minister is a good man who does want the best education for children. He wants to be able to do things for Aboriginal children. I have seen him out bush. I do not believe that he does it well. I do not think he achieves it, but I can concede the depth of his feeling in those discussions. I believe that he has a depth of feeling. Perhaps, had he been in charge of another department, with a different departmental secretary, he might have been able to get it across. Unfortunately, in this situation, he does not have the gumption to enable him to carry it through with this secretary. If it had been simply a matter of his coming in here and categorically reasserting the policy he laid down yesterday, and saying that, if the secretary was out of line on this, the minister's word would prevail, we might have been satisfied with the sacking of the secretary. However, the fact that the minister has climbed down and has allowed the secretary to continue to walk all over him means that the honourable minister must go!

Let us take another example of just how the political and administrative roles have been confused in the education ministry. We have spoken out before about politicisation of the public service. We have talked about the confusion of roles and how that has brought Queensland to the parlous state in which democracy now stands in that parliament. Recently, a departmental officer in the minister's department facilitated an article in The GEN magazine about Sanderson High School. That magazine is circulated nationally. The title is short for gender, and the magazine relates to the roles of girls and women in schools. It attempts to ensure gender equality and runs articles on good things that are done in that regard by certain schools so that other schools and people can look at those and possibly can see something applicable to themselves. That officer was reprimanded because it was not departmental policy to say nice things about Sanderson High School.

Mr Smith: The minister knows all about that.

Mr EDE: The minister knows all about this. I am not saying that the minister thought it was a good thing either, but it shows how deep the politicisation goes in this department, when it attempts to stop staff from saying good things about a particular school because that school is on the nose. When that person let others know about the reprimand, what followed was another reprimand: 'How dare you go out and say you were reprimanded on that basis!' What have we come to?

It demonstrates once again that the department is following a political agenda in relation to schools. We saw it in relation to Sanderson High School. We saw the way the minister - and, if not the minister, certainly the department - got this whole matter blown up in the NT News in the first place. I refer to the tussle over class time and the 'Locked in Battle' article. That was the article in which the minister demonstrated just how silent he could be when it came to supporting his own schools. How silent he was when we had outrageous statements about 'Marxist rubbish' from Harvey Fewings when castigating the Sanderson High School Council? Did we hear the honourable minister support his schools and his teachers? Did he support the parents? No! One would think that we had changed sides and that he was in opposition, given the way that he attacked those schools. We are the people who end up supporting the teachers and the school councils and it is the minister and his department that orchestrate the attacks.

How can the minister hold his head up in regard to what occurred at Driver High School at Palmerston on Sunday? 'Parents Worried About Punch-up' was the headline in the Sunday Territorian. It stated that teachers were standing by and doing nothing and that the police officer would not come to support the people who were being punched. The fact that the policeman was at home with his child that day did not get any coverage. The fact that the teachers immediately attempted to break up the dispute did not get a run. However, the honourable minister would have known that. Did he come out in support of his school, ask for the facts to be clarified and tell the people of Palmerston not to be so concerned because 99% of the children at the school are loyal and moral children who are trying to obtain a decent education in the face of a lack of resources? We did not hear him stick up for his schools or his teachers. All we had was a deafening silence.

The issues are absolutely clear. The minister should have acted with determination and fortitude to establish his control over the department. I have told him before that he is being white-anted. I have told him in this House and outside that the secretary is running his own agenda, which is often contrary to that of the minister. I have given him examples of this in the past. The minister has had every opportunity to establish his rightful position in relation to the secretary and the department. He knows the problems which occurred the first time he had control of this ministry and how things went bad then. When he returned to the ministry he attempted, at least initially, to establish some control. However, since then he has allowed it to get out of hand. Unfortunately, he failed to establish control in times past and that failure has encouraged the secretary to take further liberties. It has now reached the stage where the secretary is blatantly and deliberately flouting the authority of the minister.

Mr Speaker, the secretary must go and of that there is no doubt. Because of the minister's failure to demonstrate the necessary gumption, ability, determination and fortitude to take control of his department to ensure that his policies are implemented, he must also go.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, what an incredible outburst. In the time available, I will cover many of the points made by the member for Stuart, but I must say that my major disappointment lies in the fact that he is not interested in trying to resolve issues in a responsible manner. This is the so-called opposition which could become government. The arrogant opposition puts forward its views on how it would operate the system; it gets out there and stirs up the possum so that everyone is complaining, moaning and groaning.

I am disappointed that the Leader of the Opposition has not brought his deputy into line in relation to this issue. What really started the exercise referred to by the member for Stuart is himself. He is the person who went into the public arena and started this whole exercise running.

Mr Smith: That is rubbish. It started on the front page of the NT News.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, the matter for which he has moved to censure me has arisen as a direct result of his efforts on radio yesterday, when he made noises about a government backdown and so forth. There is no government backdown and he knows it. Mr Speaker, what would you expect if you heard a member of this Assembly saying such things on radio? I have not heard the program but honourable members can obtain a transcript. The member for Stuart claimed that this had been a major victory for the people. It has not been a major victory. I need to spell out here very clearly exactly what is happening because the member for Stuart is out there saying that the government has turned around the whole exercise. We have not. We have spoken to people in relation to the exercise to try to get some sense back into the debate. That is what has happened during the last few days. Sense had come back into the debate in relation to this issue until the member for Stuart went out and started to kick and scratch.

Yesterday, I answered a question in this Assembly relating to Sanderson High School. I made it very clear that my answer followed discussions with the chairman of the school council, John Vandenberg, and the principal of Sanderson High School, Warren Bury. Both of those gentlemen were in my office and we discussed the issue. Something seems to be missing in relation to the access to continuity which the member for Stuart places so much emphasis on. The reality is that there is a requirement for students to cover core areas or approved curricula. That is the difference, because to have that you have to have continuity of class time throughout the year.

Mr Bailey: You do not have to do it every time.

Mr HARRIS: It is not a matter of doing it. When you talk about the low achievers and the middle-to-low achievers, they will require a whole year to cover the areas. That is a fact of life. Therefore, it is accessible throughout the whole year. Mr Speaker, those are the sorts of things that they were arguing against.

Mr Ede: Come on. Rubbish!

Mr HARRIS: The honourable members opposite should just sit down and listen. Obviously, they need a lot of explanation if they are to understand what is actually happening.

Mr Speaker, after the question was answered yesterday morning, the member for Stuart went on radio and started to talk about this matter. He rang up school principals. Does he deny that? Does he deny that he actually got in touch with a couple of principals? Did he telephone the principal of Darwin High School or of Sanderson High School? Did someone from his office ring them up?

Members interjecting.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, may I indicate very clearly that, upon receiving information that the minister has made a statement of this kind, it is natural for principals to expect some form of response from them to the department.



What happened? The member for Stuart set the hares running at a rate of knots, saying that the minister had said this. The honourable member went on radio saying that there had been a big turnaround, which was a load of nonsense.

Mr Ede: It is what you said here.

Mr HARRIS: It is not what I said here. It does not turn it around at all.

Mr Ede: You did not even listen to it.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, the reality is that the member for Stuart is the person who started all this. I came in here yesterday just after the luncheon adjournment. I was most annoyed with the member for Stuart because he did, in fact, misrepresent everything. He has created terrible problems which we are again trying to counter. He is not interested in solving the problems. He is interested in stirring up trouble. That is all that he is interested in.

I put out a press release yesterday. Mr Speaker, I will read it into Hansard because I think it is important.

Education Minister, Tom Harris, says a campaign by the Territory opposition designed to politicise schools for the benefit of Labor politicians will not be tolerated.

It certainly will not.

Mr Harris says the opposition spokesman on education, Brian Ede, has grossly misrepresented the outcome of sensitive talks yesterday, in which government curriculum requirements were discussed with representatives of the Sanderson High School. 'Today, Mr Ede began a telephone campaign in which he misrepresented the outcome of those talks and asked school principals to help the Labor Party spread unrest amongst parents, students and teachers', the minister said. 'He is glossing over the facts, playing one school off against another, misusing his position of privilege and, by distorting information to his own ends, stirring trouble in school councils'.

'As shadow spokesman, Mr Ede has shown that he will misrepresent almost any situation to get his name in the headlines but in this latest scurrilous campaign he has sunk to a new low. School councils, parents, staff and principals deserve expert and scrupulous honesty from the opposition's representative, and their confidence is being dangerously abused. It is a sad indictment of the Opposition Leader's craving for some increase in his personal popularity that he no longer cares about taking a responsible attitude to the role of his party and opposition. Instead of calling Mr Ede to heel and sacking him, he is fawning about, egging Mr Ede on to even greater mischief'.

Mr Smith: Fawning about and egging him on. The mind boggles!

Mr HARRIS: The press release continues:

Mr Harris said parents and members of the community at large should consider whether schools should be used as a base for political debate by the Labor Party in its attempts to artificially create controversy.

Mr Speaker, we are trying to resolve this issue in a manner that is acceptable to the government. I have made it very clear all the way along that the government has a requirement to ensure that students have access and are able to meet their core requirements and the approved curriculum. That is a requirement of government and school principals know that. To put forward a view that the government has no responsibility in this area is a nonsense. Government is responsible for curriculum policy. That is a fact. It is not the Board of Studies but the government.

May I just indicate to the honourable member the respective roles of the government, the department and the Board of Studies. Under the Education Act, the Minister for Education is responsible for course accreditation. The secretary is responsible to the minister for curriculum, conduct of schooling, and for the delivery of educational services generally. The Northern Territory Board of Studies commenced operation in 1984, replacing the curriculum advisory committee which had operated since 1980. It is an advisory body to the Secretary of the Department of Education on all matters related to curriculum at primary and junior secondary level. It has separate statutory powers in relation to accreditation procedures, registration of senior secondary courses, the assessment of student performance and the certification of student achievements at both junior and senior secondary levels. It is subject to the secretary's direction in most of these functions. It is not subject to secretarial control in a number of matters because, as we all know, student assessment and the issue of certificates have to be seen to be completely impartial. These matters are accreditation processes, but not accreditation itself - the assessment of student performance, the certification of student achievement at both junior and senior secondary level through the issue respectively of the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate and the Senior Secondary Studies Certificate. Only the minister can direct the board in these matters.

It should also be pointed out that the 22 member board is widely representative of the various groups with an interest in education and is chaired by the secretary or his nominee. It has only 5 members of the Department of Education and 2 from the Territory education sector.

It needs to be made very clear, and this is one of the issues that I mentioned yesterday that was discussed during the course of my review of school council regulations, that the school councils are not responsible for the curriculum. We try to encourage involvement of parents in the whole education process and it is a partnership between parents and government and also between parents and schools. It is very important that we promote that. This government has made a point of ensuring that more and more parents are able to become involved. The worry that I have in relation to some schools is that, when you have a good council - and that relates to the people who are involved - and when you have a good principal and good staff at a school, the school runs well.

Mr Bailey: Are you implying that Sanderson doesn't?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, if the honourable psychologist opposite would just sit down for a while, he can make his comments at some other stage.

Often, it is found that parents do not want to become involved in school councils. They do not have the ...

Mr Bailey: But when they do, you interfere.

Mr HARRIS: ... expertise in relation to that.

Mr Speaker, again members opposite say that we interfere. I do not interfere in the normal process. What I am saying is that, as far as curriculum is concerned, the government has a responsibility and I am not going to back off from that in any way whatsoever. This government has a very strong direction in relation to education and reform in education. There is reform occurring throughout this country in relation to education.

The opposition kicks and scratches about Year 10 assessment. Nevertheless, to support his case, the Leader of the Opposition has used the fact that the examination results at Sanderson High School were above the average. He opposes the examinations and then uses the results to promote his cause. The way that the opposition has behaved throughout this whole exercise is a nonsense.

Let us look at the support that the government has given to Sanderson High School. The member opposite said that we were not supporting the school. That is a load of nonsense and a false allegation. Let us have a look at what support the Northern Territory government and the department have provided to Sanderson High School. We were the people who supported it in setting up the vertical timetable. There was no help from members of the opposition, who kick and scratch at every opportunity. The Northern Territory Department of Education has strongly supported Sanderson High School. Sanderson is one of the best staffed and resourced high schools in Australia. That is a fact. From the beginning, the department has actively supported the development of its program of vertical timetabling.

The current principal, Warren Bury, was appointed well in advance of the school's opening when he approached the department with his plans for vertical timetabling. It was arranged for him to review the operation of vertical timetabling in schools in most states of Australia. The department arranged for him to be able to hand-pick his initial staff to ensure that he had appropriate staffing to undertake what was then a new venture for the Northern Territory. More and more schools throughout the Northern Territory, and indeed throughout Australia, are looking at the whole matter of vertical timetabling. However, there are some problems with it and that is why a government has to make sure that there is a negotiated agreement between the secretary or director-general or whatever of the department and the schools in relation to those programs. It was said yesterday that, in relation to the vertical timetabling, minimum times and continuity of access would be negotiated with the school. That was discussed at that particular meeting. Mr Speaker, you can ask Warren Bury or John Vandenberg about that issue. I will clarify it in a letter to them because, quite obviously, the opposition is trying to gee up this whole exercise again so that it creates a political problem in the community.

This is the would-be government. It is an arrogant opposition that has a leader whose disapproval rating is extremely high, and he knows it. He has a problem in relation to that yet he is letting his opposition spokesman - to whom I have always given time and information - carry on like this. He is the one that should be censored because, quite frankly, he has indeed taken the wrong decision in this regard.

To continue in relation to what we have done for Sanderson High School, a substantial establishment grant was also provided to the school in the early years. Over-establishment staff were provided in the initial years. The principal has been encouraged by the department to promote widely the

achievements of the school. The department has published some of Sanderson's achievements. In the current debate, no acknowledgement has been made of the substantial support provided by a large number of departmental staff who would have gone out of their way to assist Sanderson. I am ashamed that members of the opposition have not acknowledged in any way the role that the Northern Territory government has had in setting up Sanderson High School and its programs. We supported it and we have continued to support it.

In relation to the matter of not altering the timetable, there are a number of schools which have vertical timetabling. We have checked these and there are very few students who do not have access to the course of study continuously throughout the year. We see no reason why Sanderson should be any different. In fact, there will be no major problems in relation to Sanderson.

Mr Smith: He got the major in.

Mr HARRIS: Forget the major. I am not worried about that. I am just saying there are no problems in relation to that. I have spoken to Warren Bury and John Vandenberg, people whom I respect. I am sorry that they have been drawn into this. I hope that John Vandenberg does not get into this whole political exercise because I have given him my guarantee of support and that will continue. I am disappointed that this letter has been received. I will definitely be telling him exactly what the situation is.

There will be no loss of choice. I have said that there is no need for timetable adjustments in order to meet our requirements that access to continuity be provided and that no student should be disadvantaged by not attempting the full approved curriculum. It is very important that we have our government schools in a position where they are able to offer to the students the approved curriculum and to ensure that they carry out their charter. There is no question about that.

The opposition has generated this debate. It has brought matters to an all-time low in relation to the way it has carried out this exercise. I would have thought that the member for Stuart would have tried to have us resolve the issue in a sensible manner. Again, I acknowledged yesterday that there were mistakes on both sides of the fence. That was acknowledged. There were some heated moments and, obviously, when John Vandenberg initially received the letter from the Board of Studies, he was upset by some of the wording it contained and he responded in an angry manner. Of course, that started some problems in relation to the general debate in the community. All I said to John Vandenberg in relation to that was that I believed the school council should have had a look at the correspondence, thought it through in more detail and considered what in fact was written. We acknowledged and he acknowledges that perhaps he should have approached it in a different way, and I have said that as well.

It is not a matter of backing down. No one is backing down. The reality is that my requirements, as Minister for Education, are able to be achieved without making any major changes, and that is a fact of life. I believe that this whole furore is a complete load of nonsense that has been brought about this morning by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Brian Ede. I am most disappointed in what he has done, but again I repeat exactly what happened following yesterday.

I answered a question in the Assembly which was to give the assurance to parents at Sanderson that the government was not going to dismantle the

school's vertical timetabling, as was being promoted in the community. I might say here that it was a disappointment that it was being promoted in that way because, as I have said, the government supports it. Following the answer that I gave here, the member for Stuart raced out and spoke on talkback, and started to make these absurd allegations in relation to turning around timetables. Someone, and I would like to know who did it, contacted principals at the various schools. What are members opposite trying to do? Are they upset that we were looking at and resolving the issue? Were they seeking to get the debate that had been generated fuelled up again, and to hell with the kids, to hell with what is going on?

I do not mind being the scapegoat on occasions for issues. Issues have been raised where I have given statements about the comments that I have received concerning standards and quality, which can be backed up. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, and I do not want to set the hares running again, that there are very serious concerns in relation to standards that are reached throughout the education system of Australia and indeed throughout the world. Those matters must be resolved and governments have a responsible role to play with regard to that. You can be rest assured that, as the minister responsible, I will ensure that all those processes are followed through and that, when a school has a problem in relation to its timetable or its programming, I will address that on a person-to-person basis with the school or its council chairman.

The meeting did not just happen with John Vandenberg and Warren Bury. I have answered a letter from the Chairman of the Sanderson High School Council and said that, following the sittings, I will visit the school during its operations and talk with parents on that occasion. Instead of being negative, several members on this side - Daryl Manzie, Fred Finch and Mick Palmer - have been helping me in this exercise. All opposition members do is kick and scratch. They do not try to resolve the issues. Fortunately, this government does use its members. They are able to have an impact on government and are aware of the direction the government is taking.

It is a pity that the members of the opposition are not interested. They are arrogant. They try to promote a clean image but, as I mentioned yesterday, there are a few slips in the media here and there, the public read a story, the public hears something on the radio and next minute it is fact. Brian Ede is telling the world what we are doing in education. What a load of nonsense! If he keeps this up, the member for Stuart has no chance of ever becoming a Minister for Education in the Northern Territory.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the question be now put.

Mr Smith: What! You are a disgraceful character.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Smith: No one is prepared to get up and defend the minister. What a disgraceful performance! That is completely and absolutely ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw the words 'disgraceful character'.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, very reluctantly indeed, I do so.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to. The ayes have it. A division is called. Ring the bells.

Mr Smith: No one has the guts to get up and defend him. No wonder he is such a bloody liability.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Mr Speaker, the language from the Leader of the Opposition, even after a division has been called, should be withdrawn immediately.

Mr Smith: You are a disgrace!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will withdraw the word 'bloody' and will withdraw the word 'disgrace' unreservedly.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I seek your reason for asking me to withdraw the word 'disgrace'. I unreservedly withdraw the word 'bloody', but why should I withdraw the word 'disgrace'? Explain to me why it is unparliamentary.

Mr SPEAKER: In the terms of maintaining the good order of the House, I request that you withdraw it.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, very reluctantly once again, I withdraw.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 14

Noes 11

Mr Coulter  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Vale

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Collins  
Mr Ede  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura  
Mr Tuxworth

Motion agreed to.

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

The Assembly divided:

AYES 7

NOES 18

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Ede  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura

Mr Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Harris

Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Tuxworth  
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

#### STATEMENT

#### Changes to Commonwealth State Housing Agreement

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I draw the attention of honourable members to new arrangements which the Commonwealth has proposed under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, commonly referred to as the CSHA, and rise to express my very deep concern at the implications these changes would have for housing in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory has been a party to agreements with the Commonwealth for housing funding since 1979, and was due to continue for a 10-year period until 1994. Central to this agreement was that it would be subject to review on a triennial basis. The first such review was conducted during 1986-87, and was undertaken jointly by the Commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory. The end result was a number of variations to the 1984 agreement that were well considered and largely acceptable to all parties.

Under the terms of the 1984 Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, a second triennial review was due in 1989. However, late in 1988, the new federal housing minister, Hon Peter Staples, established a Housing Policy Review. This review was undertaken by a team answering directly to himself and was conducted with minimal input by the states, the Australian Capital Territory or the Northern Territory, and certainly with no consultation or deliberations of a policy nature.

Mr Staples initiated this review because of his belief that there were problems with the financial viability of state housing authorities and the targeting of funds under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. The end result was the presentation, virtually as a fait accompli, of a new Commonwealth State Housing Agreement to operate for 10 years starting this financial year. The proposed new agreement is unacceptable to the Northern Territory because it is inequitable and fails to provide for the Territory's genuine needs. Honourable members may be interested in the way the Commonwealth has approached this issue. It is most instructive.

Mr Speaker, no details of the new proposals were provided at the Housing Ministers Conference held in April this year, nor even a hint was given of what was to follow. This unwillingness to consult fully was to set the pattern for the next 6 months. At the Premiers Conference in Canberra on 17 May this year, the Commonwealth's offer to the states and the Northern Territory included broad changes to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement and associated funding arrangements. In particular, the Commonwealth announced that it was converting former general purpose capital loan funds to grants under the agreement, but phasing in equal per capita distribution of

these funds between the states and the territories. This severely disadvantaged the Northern Territory but no opportunity was provided to us to put our case.

On the following day, the federal housing minister provided state and territory housing ministers with the framework of an offer for a new 10-year agreement commencing on 1 July 1989. Even this communication in late May, for an agreement to commence on 1 July, was not comprehensive. The details of the agreement were received in a piecemeal fashion over the ensuing 4 months. In fact, it was August before the first draft of the formal agreement was provided to the states and the territories. Either the details were being developed on the run by the Commonwealth, or it was deliberately keeping the states and the Northern Territory in the dark to avoid criticism. The result was that the implications of the new agreement, particularly its financial impact, were not immediately apparent. In fact, they are still under consideration and the complexity of the issues means that this process will continue for some time. But there is no doubt that they are disastrous for the Northern Territory.

Since June this year, Northern Territory officials have met Commonwealth and other state and territory officials on various occasions in an attempt to clarify and resolve the financial and other issues. While a number of matters have yet to be resolved, the Commonwealth has belatedly shown some willingness to acknowledge that what the territories and the states have to say has validity. The enabling legislation which has been tabled in the federal parliament incorporates certain amendments at the behest of the territories and the states, but serious issues remain and, overall, the proposals remain totally unacceptable to the Northern Territory.

One major area of dissension has been the lack of guaranteed funding. The Commonwealth was asking the states and the territories to sign a 10-year agreement which had total funding guaranteed for the first year only. Mr Speaker, we cannot conduct government-to-government business on this basis, and it would be irresponsible to do so. Too often in the past, we have experienced the Commonwealth walking away from these types of commitments. At the instigation of the states and the territories, and after consistent lobbying, the Commonwealth has now offered a guaranteed minimum level of funding for the first 4 years. In my view, that is still not good enough.

The Northern Territory will not sign the 1989 Commonwealth State Housing Agreement until this and a number of other issues have been adequately and satisfactorily addressed. Of paramount importance is that the Commonwealth must accept that the equal per capita distribution of funding between the states and the territories for housing which it proposes represents a crippling and inequitable disability for the Northern Territory and is unacceptable to us. The Northern Territory has very properly argued for a long time that per capita distribution of funding under the housing agreement would place us at a serious disadvantage in comparison to the more populous and economically developed states. It is a crude and unfair formula which fails to acknowledge particular circumstances.

Clearly, any funding arrangement for housing must take into account such factors as family formation and population growth; that is, the actual demand for additional housing and the actual cost of providing such housing. There are, of course, other factors which must be clearly recognised in determining the Territory's share of the total housing allocation funds. One is the size of the public housing sector here, 22% of all dwellings as against a national level of 5%. A per capita distribution assumes a uniformity between states



with regard to the public housing estate and the housing needs of each state's population. This is clearly not the case.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Mr SPEAKER: Ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is present. The honourable Chief Minister.

Mr PERRON: Another factor is the cost of providing and maintaining housing. With its sparse and scattered population distribution, distances between major centres and lack of home-grown industry, the Northern Territory is massively disadvantaged vis-a-vis other parts of Australia in the cost of providing housing. A per capita funding distribution would monstrously disadvantage the Northern Territory and would have no valid basis as an approach to an important aspect of intergovernmental financial relations. To make matters even worse, the new agreement proposes a conversion of nominated loan funds to grants for inclusion in the per capita distribution formula.

I will clarify what this means. It is important for all honourable members to appreciate just how savage an attack on our funding this proposal is. In the past, the states and the Territory were able to 'nominate' loan funds allocated as general purpose capital assistance specifically for housing. If 'nominated' for housing, these loans attracted a concessional interest rate of 4.5% per annum. In 1988-89, a total of \$310.5m nationally was available for nomination. The move to convert 'nominated' loan funds to grants is appropriate and will have a longer-term effect in reducing the loan servicing responsibilities of the territories and states. However, if included in the total CSHA funding pool, these funds are then subject to the per capita allocation as well, and the Northern Territory loses its former equity in the 'nominated' funds pool. The dislocation to the Territory budget would be massive and, once again, way out of proportion to the impact in the states.

The Commonwealth has partially acknowledged the consequences by proposing a phasing-in period to these arrangements. The Commonwealth has now proposed that the distribution in 1989-90 will be the same as in 1988-89. By 1992-93, however, the \$310.5m will be on a full per capita basis and the Northern Territory's share will be about \$3m compared to the present \$44m. Let me be clear. Under the Commonwealth proposals, we will have suffered a drop of more than \$40m by the fourth year of this proposed agreement. Overall, the proposals represent a loss of nearly \$100m in the first 4 years and \$44m per year thereafter compared to current funding levels.

The only recognition of this by the Commonwealth is that it will take 'into account' the adverse effects of the per capita distribution in determining future funding levels for the Northern Territory. This is totally unacceptable. It represents a dramatic continuation of the devastating attacks on Territory funding which have been the hallmark of the present federal government. It shows just how little regard it has for the Northern Territory and its people. The Commonwealth appears determined to deny us any opportunity to grow and determined to withdraw from Territorians even a basic level of services.

The effect of what the Commonwealth is doing to the Territory through its housing proposals is best illustrated by the following figures. By 1992-93,

when full per capita sharing is in place, the Northern Territory will receive \$13.3m in grants for general rental housing activities. However, the Territory will be obliged to return some \$11.2m of this to the Commonwealth in principal and interest for the repayment of past loans. This will be 84% of that year's funding, leaving a pathetic residual \$2.1m contribution from the Commonwealth towards public housing in the Northern Territory. At the same time, the Northern Territory's minimum matching contribution will be \$6.7m and in fact it is likely to be well above that level.

Some specific purpose programs under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement will not be subject to per capita distribution, on the basis of evident special needs, such as under the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program. But even in these areas, funding remains far less than would be required to make significant inroads into already existing backlogs. For example, the backlog of housing and services in the area of Aboriginal rental housing is estimated to total more than \$700m. This year's allocation of \$19.4m goes little way to overcoming the problem.

It is a matter of record that this government has a history of genuine achievement in housing. A massive \$1400m has been spent in the 11 years since self-government, of which the Commonwealth contribution has amounted to \$393m. Of this, the Territory government, from its own resources, has provided more than 70% of the total amount in housing. Over this period, we have seen the situation change from one of high private rents, housing shortages and low levels of home ownership in the late 1970s to today's relative stability in the housing market. The Northern Territory can boast a public housing system which is of a high standard, is not means tested and is available after relatively short waiting times. Of course, there are still problems, particularly for those facing the record costs of housing finance. Territorians are waiting for Mr Keating and Mr Snowdon to explain why their realistic hopes of a few years ago are now in tatters. Indeed, it might be asked where Mr Snowdon, the great intervenor, has been while this further raid on Commonwealth funding has been planned.

Mr Speaker, another issue yet to be resolved is the matter of home ownership assistance. There are requirements under the CSHA for the Northern Territory to match Commonwealth funds of \$13.34m per annum, half of which may come from expenditure related to home purchase assistance schemes. While this is not a problem in itself, these schemes must be approved by the Commonwealth to be eligible for matching purposes. The Northern Territory's major home ownership assistance scheme, the Interest Subsidy Scheme, has yet to be given such approved status. This scheme is simple to administer and effective, providing a subsidy to low income families which allows them to afford private sector loans. Until agreement is reached with the Commonwealth regarding the eligibility of the Interest Subsidy Scheme, the total financial picture is uncertain. I wonder whether such approval is being withheld pending a little pressure on us to sign the CSHA.

The Commonwealth has embarked on a course to slash Territory funds for housing and to impose greater control over how we use the funds we receive. The Territory government will not be party to such a course. Territorians deserve better. We know what needs to be done. We know, far better than does the Commonwealth, where the priorities must be and we are entitled to fair and reasonable funding. We will continue to insist loudly on a fair deal for Territorians. The Territory cannot accept a further round of Commonwealth financial thuggery. Already we have been beaten financially beyond our reasonable capacity to cope. It is time that Territorians had some help from the federal ALP members. Perhaps Mr Snowdon could explain how continuing

savage cuts to our funding, cuts which far exceed our share of reduced public spending for the states, will benefit the Territory and why they are good for us. Territorians know that a Canberra ALP government has brought the Territory to its knees through crippling and vindictive financial treatment. This latest issue goes beyond even that. It drags intergovernmental relationships down to the level of a sick joke. My government will continue to fight for what is fair and reasonable in the interest of all Territorians.

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, that statement, which was read word for word by the Chief Minister, does the purpose of government in the Northern Territory no credit whatsoever. I am concerned at the impact that statements like that have on our relationship with the federal government. I suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that anybody who is expecting housing assistance from this government and who expects it to carry out its negotiations with the federal government in a sensible fashion should be deeply alarmed at the tone of the Chief Minister's statement, if nothing else, and its lack of detail, as I will explain later. What I want to know at the outset is why the Chief Minister is delivering this statement. In view of the media debate that has been carried out in recent months about the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement and its impact, not just on the Northern Territory but on housing concerns right round this country, I want to know why the Chief Minister is buying into it at this particular time and why the Minister for Lands and Housing, who is responsible presumably for conducting negotiations surrounding this agreement and its impact on the Northern Territory, does not even take the trouble to come into this Chamber and listen to the debate. That is what I want to know.

Presumably, the Chief Minister, as Treasurer, was involved in the Premiers Conference. The Chief Minister assented at the Premiers Conference to certain aspects of the financial relationship between the Territory and the Commonwealth in 1989-90. What I want to know is why, if the Chief Minister has had these concerns, he has taken so long to draw them to our attention.

Mr Perron: We were waiting for sanity to prevail.

Mr BELL: Well, in his statement, the Chief Minister made great play of the federal government's ignore of this government's plight.

I want to draw something to the honourable Chief Minister's attention. I appreciate that he has a very heavy workload and that he does not have the opportunity to be right across all the details involved in this, but he made the broad-brush claim in his statement that the federal government had not bothered to consult with him, and that was, in fact, about 80% of what he had to say. What I propose to do is to point out a few details to him that he is obviously unaware of. At the outset, I would like to draw his attention to the negotiations that have been continuing, presumably at officer level, although I presume that his Minister for Lands and Housing was aware of them. I draw his attention to the offers made by the Commonwealth for this government to participate in seminars relating to the housing review that the Chief Minister referred to, back on 29 June this year. I understand that officers of the Housing Commission were involved in that exercise.

I presume the Chief Minister is aware also of the debate that was carried out in the pages of the NT News, with this extraordinary headline: 'Tenants at Risk, Says the Government'. I am not surprised that the Minister for Lands and Housing is not prepared to get up in this debate, and I am not surprised that the Minister for Lands and Housing is not prepared even to sit in here

and listen to it, because comments from the Minister for Lands and Housing, putting the fear of God into public tenants in the Northern Territory by saying that they were likely to be turfed out of their homes because of this big bad federal government, were positively outrageous and irresponsible.

The plain fact of the matter is that this government is on the skids and its members should know that, in the short time remaining to them, they should at least desist from causing that sort of fear in ordinary people who want basically to live their lives as public tenants in the Northern Territory without the Minister for Lands and Housing, or the Chief Minister for that matter, raising furphies about their continuing tenancy in their houses.

Mr Perron: All he was doing was warning them.

Mr BELL: Well, I hear the interjection from the Chief Minister. When the Chief Minister sums up on this statement, I would like him to defend that sort of comment. I would like the Chief Minister to get up and tell me which class of public tenants are at risk because of these financial arrangements. That is and always was a furphy, and the Chief Minister and the Minister for Lands and Housing deserve the strongest possible condemnation for their pursuit of that sort of irresponsible public debate.

I want to place on the record, Mr Speaker, that the Minister for Tourism has passed across to me a note indicating that the Minister for Lands and Housing is at a funeral.

A member: At the dentist.

Mr BELL: He is at the dentist. He indicated to me that he was at a funeral. I would like to point out for the benefit of the Minister for Tourism, who has recently acceded to the frontbench and is obviously unaware of the capacity of frontbenchers to direct business in this House, that this statement can be brought on at any time when there is not a motion before the Chair. As far as I am concerned, passing a note to me across the Chamber in that regard indicates only his paucity of understanding of the processes of public debate in the Northern Territory.

Mr Vale interjecting.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, let me return to the failure of this government to conduct its government-to-government relationships in a satisfactory fashion, and this is the guts of it. If the minister has genuine concerns about per capita funding, so do I, and I think that I understand the variety of the housing market in the Northern Territory better than the Chief Minister does.

Mr Perron: I would doubt it.

Mr BELL: I think that once you have listened to me for another 20 minutes, you may have learned something.

Mr Coulter: All right, you win. Now sit down.

Mr BELL: I did not realise that the Deputy Chief Minister was such an easy quitter.

Mr Speaker, if the Chief Minister has these concerns about per capita funding and, as I said, I share them, I believe that his statement in this Assembly should have been a little more measured than it was. Let me turn to

the very slim basis for his argument on this matter. In 2 paragraphs, the Chief Minister dismissed the basis for the problem of per capita funding for the Territory. He described it as 'a crude and unfair formula which fails to acknowledge particular circumstances'. He went on to say that: 'Clearly, any funding arrangement for housing must take into account such factors as family formation and population growth; that is, the actual demand for additional housing and the actual cost of providing such housing. There are, of course, other factors which must be clearly recognised in determining the Territory's share of the total housing allocation funds. One is the size of the public housing sector here'. He did provide some information there but, in the remainder of his statement, he provided no detailed information about why the per capita formula is a problem for the Northern Territory. Let me give him a few clues.

He dragged the blackfellows in, Mr Speaker. He dragged them in when it suited his argument. He talked about Aboriginal rental housing. Let me just talk ...

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr BELL: Oh yes. I find it difficult to talk civilly to the member for Sadadeen after his outburst during the last sittings, but suffice it to say that there would not be a constituent of mine who would complain about the form of words I used in that regard. However, if the honourable member has developed a taste for nicety, let me rephrase my remark more eloquently and say that the Chief Minister finds it convenient to refer to the Aboriginal housing situation when it suits his argument.

I will make just a couple of points for him in that regard. Aboriginal Aboriginal rental housing falls under at least 3 categories. There is Aboriginal rental housing in Aboriginal communities that are outside the economic mainstream. We need one strategy there. There is rental housing for fringe dwelling Aboriginals around Darwin, Alice Springs and many of the other towns in the Territory, where they are closer to economic mainstream economic processes. We need another strategy in that regard. The third category is in places where Aboriginal people are moving into public housing in the towns of the Territory. Many of those people have not had the generations of experience of living in a 3-bedroomed house that most members of this Assembly have had, and different strategies are required in that regard.

Having dealt with Aboriginal rental housing, let me give another example of the sort of close argument which the Chief Minister ought to be using. If there is a problem with per capita funding in the Northern Territory and if family structure is different in the Northern Territory, we should have a look at the housing markets in the main Territory centres, particularly Darwin. We should be looking at the rate of increase in the market value of houses in the Northern Territory and how well our Interest Subsidy Scheme is impacting on the ability of young families to move into that housing. The Chief Minister's statement made no reference to that. When ministers of this government talk about housing policy, all they do is sloganeer. They bag the federal government because it does not happen to be of their own political colour, and then they sloganeer about housing schemes.

Mr Speaker, do you remember the shared equity scheme proposed during the last election? We have not heard a word about it since. The Chief Minister gets up here and talks about the Interest Subsidy Scheme. Let me tell you Mr Speaker, that I am interested to hear hard figures about the impact that scheme has on people trying to buy homes in the northern suburbs of Darwin,

places like Leanyer and Karama, and in Alice Springs. I am also interested to hear about the impact that the scheme has on the real estate industry. My contacts in the real estate industry have been tearing out their hair because this government has done so little in terms of public debate about the housing market in the Northern Territory. It is outrageous that the Chief Minister can make a statement bagging the federal government for some imagined failure to consult and yet be so thin on the ground with details about the Territory housing market's concerns.

Mr Perron: It is a statement about federal funding.

Mr BELL: If the Chief Minister wants the assistance of the opposition in this regard, we will be more than happy to provide it.

Mr Perron: You are 6 months too late.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, as I have said, the Chief Minister has not taken up the opportunities for consultation provided by the federal government. Hon Peter Staples, the federal Minister for Housing and Aged Care has provided opportunities, both at officer level and personally, at which to listen to what the Territory government has to say. There are circumstances which are peculiar to the Northern Territory, and those circumstances need to be demonstrated by argument. If this statement is the best that this government can come up with then, if I were Peter Staples, I would be walking away too. The fact is that it presents a very poorly argued case for special consideration.

I extend an offer to the Chief Minister and his Minister for Lands and Housing. I am prepared to put in time to assist them to argue a case in Canberra. I am prepared to put in my time to argue their case with the staff of the federal minister and with the minister himself. I doubt that the Chief Minister will have the humility to take that offer up. He has done such a poor job with this particular statement that I doubt that he will.

Mr Perron: I am under no delusion.

Mr BELL: In any case, I extend the offer.

I wish to emphasise the fact that the Chief Minister was first made aware of the changes to these funding arrangements at the Premiers Conference in May. He has known about them for 6 months, and now he has the gall to get up in this Chamber and beat the federal government about the head over the matter and to do absolutely nothing while his Minister for Lands and Housing conducts scare campaigns. It is absolutely outrageous. What the Chief Minister ought to be explaining to this Assembly, as well as to his federal counterparts, is why he has been so silent for the last 6 months. The Chief Minister and the Minister for Lands and Housing should be aware of repeated requests from the federal government to provide details about their expenditure of Commonwealth State Housing Agreement funds. The fact is that, right or wrong, there is an impression that this government has played fast and loose with those funds.

Let me give an example, Mr Speaker. During the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill during the last sittings, I endeavoured to find out a little bit about the financial processes involved with the Yulara Corporation. Yulara is in my electorate and obviously I need to be aware of the corporation's processes as an organisation in receipt of public moneys. It received Commonwealth State Housing Agreement funds for the purpose of building, from recollection, some 70 accommodation units of varying sizes.

You will recall, Mr Speaker, that I endeavoured to obtain some picture of the financial processes of the Yulara Corporation. What was I met with? I was met with a blank wall. The Minister for Industries and Development said: 'Sorry. We are just not telling you. If you want to find out about that you are going to have to win government first'. That was his position.

I remind the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Industries and Development that there is a federal Labor government in power. Labor is in power, not the opposition, and it holds the purse strings. Whilst the Minister for Industries and Development and the Chief Minister have the numbers in this Assembly and can brush me off, I point out to them that, in Canberra, Mr Staples has the numbers as well as the money. The Chief Minister might find that it is necessary for him to be a little more patent about the way he has spent CSHA funds in the past.

If the Chief Minister has a complaint, I suggest that he talk about how he has targeted housing funds in the Territory. He weeps copious tears over the backlog in relation to Aboriginal rental housing but says nothing about his failure and his government's failure to account for the expenditure of CSHA funds at places like Yulara. I know that the housing there was sorely needed. Before the Chief Minister gets up and misconstrues what I have to say and argues that I did not really want it built there in the first place, let me say that I believe it was necessary. However, I believe that, as much as that housing was necessary, so is accounting for public funds necessary. We endeavour to make these members opposite accountable, Mr Speaker, but we do not have the numbers yet. By golly, though, it looks as if the federal Labor government is getting a few guarantees out of these blokes. It is not before time, Mr Speaker.

The one further issue that I wanted to raise, Mr Speaker, was the public debate over this matter. In addition to the offers which have come from the federal government in terms of consultation, I refer to the public debate which arose from the claim of the Minister for Lands and Housing that tenants were at risk. That created a headline. It was followed by a response from the federal minister and Senator Bob Collins and a more extensive review by Mr Alcorta of the NT News, who stated that there were issues of concern on both sides. He said: 'Both sides correct in housing debate'. Mr Speaker, it is obvious that the Chief Minister has not read the article and I suggest that he do so, because Mr Alcorta's arguments are very similar to my own.

Firstly, he stated that there needed to be a consideration of the impact of the per capita formula. Let me be categorical about that. There needs to be an objective assessment of the impact of the formula, not the sort of dismissal in a few paragraphs which we have seen in the minister's statement today. The second point Mr Alcorta made was that there had been consultation by the federal government. He concluded his article by saying: 'The issue, at least for the moment, has been laid to rest by Mr Staples' assurances'. That was in August this year. The selective fashion that the honourable Chief Minister adopts in introducing statements of this sort to this House is really quite extraordinary. I think that, if that is the best the Chief Minister can do in conducting his relationship with the federal government, it is about time that he moved aside. Fortunately, the people of the Northern Territory will arrange that for him fairly shortly.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the Chief Minister's statement. In doing so, I certainly intend to take the issue with the member for MacDonnell not only on his inane remarks but for his total lack of preparation and his total lack of knowledge regarding a subject for

which he is purportedly the opposition spokesman. He asked for the reasons why the Chief Minister made the statement. Obviously, it is an economic matter and the Chief Minister is the Treasurer and leader of the government. He is the appropriate person to talk about something that will lose us \$100m over the next 4 years and then \$44m a year in today's values thereafter. That is an inescapable fact. You cannot get away from that. The Territory will lose \$100m over the next 4 years. I do not know where we will make up that shortfall. Maybe the opposition would like to suggest we take the money from health services, schools, road funding, local government or community services, or from correctional services or the police. I do not know where it will suggest we take it from. The fact is that we will lose \$100m. The member for MacDonnell, who made quite a noise about my not being in the House, is presently not in the Chamber himself. He asked why the Chief Minister was the spokesman.

There is something else that I would like to add for the benefit of honourable members opposite. We are in the same boat as the states. Premier Greiner, Premier Field and Premier Bannon and, in fact, all the Premiers have been making statements on housing for much the same reasons. To top it off, when we were talking about matters of per capita funding and the loss to the Territory, the federal minister actually said to me: 'This is a matter that cannot be resolved between yourself and myself. It is a matter which has to be resolved between your Chief Minister, the Prime Minister and the Treasurer in the way that the Premier of Tasmania and the Premier of South Australia and the other Premiers have to resolve it with the Prime Minister and the Treasurer'. Not only is the Chief Minister and Treasurer the appropriate person to be raising the matter but the federal housing minister has told me that he is also the appropriate person because of this per capita funding shortfall. You would think that the spokesman for housing matters opposite would have some clue about that. He knows nothing. He does not miss a chance to try to score a point but, as always, he is wrong.

The member for MacDonnell raised another matter. He said several times that headlines in the NT News were a furphy. Mr Deputy Speaker, what were the headlines about? I will tell you. They were about a suggestion by the federal government that the CSHA ...

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: I hear the Leader of the Opposition. I would like him to sit down and listen so that later he can give us the benefit of his views about this. He might like to let us know where he stands because the headlines were about a proposal in a draft CSHA document forwarded by the federal minister regarding the determination of writs. It proposed that the following replace clauses 32 and 33 of the 1984 CSHA:

In determining rents for rental housing in accordance with Recital (D), states should fix rents having regard primarily to the cost of providing rental housing and to the capacity of tenants to afford to pay.

What does that mean, Mr Deputy Speaker? It means means-testing people's incomes. That is pretty plain and I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition would have to agree that that is what it means. The member for MacDonnell says that it is a furphy. I wish he had made himself conversant with what is proposed. Had he done so, for once he might have stood up for Territorians and said: 'This is not a good idea. This is something we do not want in the Territory'. He did not do that. He said it was a furphy.



Mr Smith: It was a furphy, and you know it.

Mr MANZIE: What a brilliant comment from the Leader of the Opposition! I will read this very slowly because he is a slow learner and he does not recognise the truth.

Mr Smith: I am not as thick as you are, though.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, he does not want to stand up for Territorians. He is not interested in deals that his federal colleagues do amongst themselves and with other states, deals which might cause detriment to the Territory. He is not interested in the ongoing behaviour of the federal member, who does not care about funds to Territorians being slashed. In determining rents for rental housing, the costs of providing rental housing will relate to the capacity of tenants to afford to pay. I pointed that out in a media statement - I said also that the matter would, or could, affect a number of Territorians. I said that it was estimated that 25% of the commission's 9400 tenants would be affected - 2300 tenants. Research showed that only 25% of the tenants received more than the average combined family income of \$455 per week. The salary of an A5 public servant is actually in that range. In other words, that is the number of people who would have been affected by this proposal to test income as a means of setting rents.

Thankfully, we actually saw the federal minister draw back into that particular proposal, which was watered down. That was not simply because of my protests but because of the protests of ministers in the states, who were appalled by the suggestion. They all had support right across the board. However, whilst in the Territory our federal members were saying that it was not true, it was in writing. It was a proposal made by the federal minister.

The other matter that upset me and caused a great deal of concern around the country was portability of waiting time. It was suggested that, if you were on the list in Victoria for a few years and then came up here, that waiting time would be counted. I am sure Territorians would appreciate seeing an interstate person arrive and be given a house. That might suit the opposition but it did not suit Territorians who spoke to me. It did not suit other Australians. That protest was made very strongly to the federal minister and a change was made. Just after I made that call, there was a meeting between all the officers of the states and they protested vigorously about those provisions. The Commonwealth minister changed them and made a statement which would guarantee that that sort of thing would not happen. But that did not happen because of the efforts made by members of the opposition to ensure that that proposition was changed. They pretended that no such thing was happening and put their heads in the sand.

In a minute, we will see the Leader of the Opposition stand up and tell us that the federal housing minister was actually telling lies when he sent us this proposition, that he did not really mean it and just wrote it down for fun. That is all he can say, if he stays with the story that he has decided to stick to.

Then we had a claim that there had been a refusal to negotiate. Again, that is absolutely ridiculous. I will run through the scenario, because the opposition's housing spokesman should be up on these things. It is pretty easy information to find out. He might even have bothered to ask me and we could have told him. He could have asked some of his interstate colleagues and they might have told him, if they trust him. Maybe they do not. Perhaps they know what he is like when he gets a little information. He likes to distort it and leave out those bits that do not suit him.

Let us go back to the April 1989 housing ministers' meeting in the ACT. No indications whatsoever were given by the federal minister as to what the proposed CSHA would consist of. I was not the only minister who was asking for details; all ministers were. There were no indications given whatsoever. On 18 May, at the Premiers Conference, a very broad statement was made about what was proposed under the new CSHA. It was made in broad terms so that it was something that everyone said sounded like a good idea. The next day, we received a 10-page fax, which laid out in slightly broader terms, but still with no details, an outline of the proposed CSHA. In early June, 2 Commonwealth officers visited the Territory to discuss with Housing Commission officers what the proposed CSHA was all about. They had very good intentions. They were very diligent officers. Unfortunately, they had no details of what it was about. They were unable to provide details because the Commonwealth, through the federal minister, still had not worked them out.

Through June and July, I received a steady flow of letters from the federal minister, 11 letters in all, and each one put forward an extra bit of information, added a bit and took a bit away. The proposal was added to, then it was changed. A little more was put in and a little bit was dropped off. Mr Deputy Speaker, do you think I was not starting to get worried, especially when some of these proposals were saying that the agreement would require us to means-test our tenants and that we were to have portability of wait times as well as a number of other things? I was getting pretty worried, and still we were not getting anywhere. It was obvious that the Commonwealth was developing its policy on the run. Nothing else could be clearer. Its own officers were not too sure of what was going on and we just received this roll of letters. I called for a conference of housing ministers and the federal minister in relation to the whole question because it was becoming ridiculous. I was supported in writing by a number of states, including some of the Labor states. We did not get a conference.

In late June, the states and the Northern Territory met of their own volition without the Commonwealth. It was not the conservative states only. It was all states, from both sides of the political spectrum, because we were all experiencing the same problem. A meeting was organised without the Commonwealth to discuss what was going on, to try to make head and tail of what was proposed and to get something concrete on what it was all about. Then, in early August, we received a first draft from the Commonwealth. There was another meeting at which Commonwealth and states officers went through the draft. In early September, we received a second draft, which still contained matters that had been discussed by the states and the Commonwealth but had not been resolved. The states had raised these matters as difficulties and they were still not resolved. So then what happened? In early October, we received a final draft and, lo and behold, the final draft contained matters which had never been discussed between any of the states and the Commonwealth. That is not what I would call a satisfactory way to carry out negotiations and, if anyone thinks that it is, they have a problem.

Obviously, the member for MacDonnell has a problem. He castigated the Territory government for refusing to negotiate. There have been more negotiations on this than on just about anything else because not only the Territory has problems with it. All of the states have problems with this, and they are frustrated. Their officers have been visiting the federal minister, calling for conferences and trying to develop an agreement which is a bit sensible and can be put together in a fair and equitable manner.

Whilst all this was going on, the federal minister was asking all the states to respond so that he would be able to take our responses into account

prior to tabling the agreement in the parliament. It was a bit hard to respond because, by the time we sorted out what the proposal was, we had received a fresh proposal followed by another proposal. All the states have problems. They have all complained about a lack of time. Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is grinning. He thinks it is funny.

Mr Smith: No, I do not.

Mr MANZIE: He thinks it is funny. He thinks the fact that we are to lose \$100m over the next 4 years is funny. I do not think it is funny. I think it is one of the most serious things that has happened to the Territory and I think all members should stand up and take note of the fact. The federal member has done nothing except to castigate me when I had the temerity to point out to the community what was going on. The member for MacDonnell does nothing except accuse the government of refusing to negotiate. The Leader of the Opposition sits there and laughs. He has said nothing. He has written no letters. He has made no inquiries.

We will lose \$100m. The ALP has struck again at the Territory. It looked around and saw that the Territory government had a fine housing program. It has managed to provide housing to the majority of its people. It has a good housing loan scheme that provides the ability for people to get out from under the weather. There is the opportunity for people to buy houses. This is no good. Fancy having a ...

Mr Coulter: Last time, he got on an aeroplane and tried to stop it.

Mr MANZIE: Yes, that is something else we will get to a little later.

Mr Smith: You had better hurry up.

Mr MANZIE: But there we go, it is a great system. They looked around, and decided to try to stop it.

Some of the states are saying still that they will not sign. They have problems still.

The other important matter that has been brought up is the claim from the member for MacDonnell that the Commonwealth wants details of the money we have expended under the CSHA. Where did he get that rubbish from? Where did he get that? It just came out of his head, and the Leader of the Opposition might like to get up and try to give an answer on this, because his housing spokesman was making a most serious claim, a claim that the Commonwealth says that we have not provided details of money expended.

If he had read the CSHA, he would know that the Territory and all other governments involved in that arrangement are required to provide details of both direct fund and nominated fund expenditure to the Commonwealth by October/November of each year. We have done that every year since we have been a member of the agreement, and the acquittals have been accepted by the Commonwealth each year. It is a requirement of the agreement. It has been followed, and it has been accepted. Why is the member for MacDonnell claiming that the Commonwealth wants details about money expended? You will have to answer that, because he is your spokesman ...

Mr Smith: Don't point your finger at me, it might fall off!

Mr MANZIE: Well, you get on to him and change him if he does not get across what he is supposed to be about. He has been making accusations regarding the agreement, and he has not even read the agreement and he knows nothing of what it is about. If the Leader of the Opposition likes to continue with someone who is supposed to be speaking on behalf of the opposition but who knows nothing about the subject and makes false accusations, so be it. The community understands his problem.

And now, the furphy of Yulara. The opposition spokesman says that something shonky is going on at Yulara. House building at Yulara has been continuing in the same manner that it has in other parts of the Territory. It has been continuing for a number of years, and there were no problems with that until the Territory member of the House of Representatives and the member for MacDonnell started a snide campaign insinuating that, somehow or other, the Territory government was misusing Commonwealth funds to build Yulara. They started suggesting it to media reporters and to the federal minister. This occurred when we had been acquitting the expenditure of funds in accordance with Commonwealth requirements under the agreement. Yet they say that, somehow or other, we have done the wrong thing.

I will reiterate the assurances I gave to the federal minister on 19 October, as a result of these scurrilous attacks on the integrity of the Territory government. The provision of Housing Commission accommodation at Yulara is no different to the provision of Housing Commission accommodation elsewhere in the Territory. The housing has been provided in direct response to demand from Territorians employed in the tourist industry. The construction of 456 accommodation units at Yulara since 1985 has occurred in conjunction with an active public housing program throughout the Northern Territory, with a total of over 3000 dwellings being funded during this period. Accommodation at Yulara has been funded using a combination of semi-government borrowings, internally-generated Housing Commission funds, and nominated loan funds. All acquittals to the Commonwealth regarding it have been accepted. The suggestion that has been made is scurrilous and improper.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition has any gumption he will apologise for the behaviour of and the suggestions made by his spokesman, and he will tell him to get himself briefed better about what is going on around the Territory with regard to housing.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT  
Roads and Road Funding

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a statement today on a subject of great importance to Territorians and of singular importance to the economic development of the Territory as we look to the 1990s. Last month, the eyes of the nation were opened to a severe problem on Australia's roads. The death of 20 people in 1 accident, involving a tourist coach and a semitrailer, led to a national outcry.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr FINCH: Of course, that may not be of interest to members of the opposition.

It is a pity that a tragedy that took the lives of those unfortunate and innocent people was required to highlight a need for great change. While some have pointed the finger at the trucking industry, I believe that the principal solution lies elsewhere. The message I will be taking to a meeting of my state and federal counterparts arranged to discuss this dilemma is a simple one: roads. The standard of some of our roads is a problem and I think it is high time that, as members of the Territory Legislative Assembly, we examined what has been happening with our roads, not only from the safety aspect, but also with regard to the future of the Territory itself.

Mr Smith: Hear, hear!

Mr FINCH: I am pleased that we have some support, at this stage, from the opposition.

Before I deal with the Territory specifically, I will mention studies conducted by the Australian Automobile Association which showed that poor roads are responsible for 30% of all crashes. What is more, the federal Office of Road Safety's studies have indicated that, per state, better roads could reduce crash fatalities by 85%.

There is no question that the Northern Territory is in a position vastly dissimilar to that of the states in terms of the establishment and maintenance of road infrastructure. Territorians depend almost entirely upon roads to provide transport for our economic activities. Without railways and with few coastal shipping services, roads provide transport links essential to our economy. Tourism, mining and energy, the pastoral industry, defence activities and our small but growing manufacturing base are all underpinned by the need for road development. Road development is the key to the economic viability and social fabric of the Territory, so we have always needed to look at where we are going with our roads.

The Northern Territory road network consists of 28 500 km of public road, the vast majority of which is the responsibility of the Territory government. This is not the case in most of the states, where state governments do not have responsibility for local roads as we do here. Of the total roads in the Northern Territory, only 5700 km are sealed at this time, with the national highway network contributing 2700 km. In the main, the road network which we inherited at self-government 11 years ago was significantly substandard by comparison to roads elsewhere. As a measure of our commitment, our government will spend \$53.7m on roads in 1989-90, and that is a magnificent effort given the small population base that we have in the Territory and against, of course, a background of federal funding cuts of some \$200m or more over the last few years.

In comparative terms, the Territory government returns to the road user far more than the road user pays out in NT fuel tax. When a motorist pays, say, 62.9¢ per litre for fuel, the Territory government portion by way of fuel excise is just 4¢. The Commonwealth fuel excise stands currently at 23.15¢ per litre, and of that amount only some 23% is returned to the motorist in spending on roads.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr FINCH: Of course, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition does not have to listen to this. The Leader of the Opposition displays exactly the same contempt for the road system available for Territorians as does his colleague in Canberra, Mr Warren Snowdon.

However, the Territory government spends more on roads than it collects in road user taxes and charges, including registration, licences and fuel franchises. The same commitment is clearly absent from the federal government. In August this year, the federal government increased the fuel excise, netting itself an additional \$200m a year. There, in very general terms, is the difference between this government's priorities and those of the federal Labor government. However, the picture becomes even less thrilling when we begin to examine funding allocations to the Northern Territory.

On 1 January this year, the ABRD - the Australian Bicentennial Roads Program - and the Australian Land Transport Program were replaced with a 5-year Australian Centennial Roads Development program. The stated federal government objective of this new program, and I quote from its May economic statement of 1988, was 'to obtain increased value from investment in roads by directing a larger share of funding for roads of national significance with high economic benefits'. It said that these roads 'include national highways and a category of national arterial roads'. Such an announcement should have been a source of great joy to the Northern Territory, but only in the area of local roads did the Territory government get any joy, with a small increase from \$12.3m to \$13.5m which, allowing for inflation, barely maintains the spending effort in that area.

Our federal representative, Mr Warren Snowdon, buttered us up very nicely when he stated in February this year: 'You do not have to be a mental giant to realise that a quality road system is essential to the expansion of our tourist industry, improving access to markets for local industry and defence'. He went on to say that he was 'more than interested to receive an update from federal Transport Minister, Bob Brown, on funding for our highway system and arterial road projects'. The same man told us only this month that 'this financial year, the Hawke government increased road funding by almost 10% or \$120m nationally'. We would all be very grateful indeed if Mr Snowdon's rhetoric bore any relation to the truth of the matter.

The truth of the matter is this. Under the Australian Centennial Road Development program, the Northern Territory is not better off. It is not even maintaining the spending level of previous road programs. In fact, the Northern Territory is losing. Let me begin with national highways. Certainly, you do not have to be a mental giant to recognise a cut of 25% in national highways funding when it slaps you in the face. National highway funding is down from \$26.5m to \$20m in 1988-89 dollars, and this has occurred at a time when our No 1 priority should be the completion of the Stuart and Barkly Highways and the more urgent upgrading of the Victoria Highway. The Victoria Highway represents 470 km of the Australian national highway system. It is vital for defence, tourism, commerce and national development yet, as a result of federal government neglect, it remains a substandard, 20-year-old beef road with a narrow 3.7 m seal, subject to severe and frequent flooding resulting in a rapidly deteriorating pavement. The Victoria Highway represents a serious safety hazard, particularly given the blend of traffic that uses it as tourist buses, cars, caravans and road trains frequent this vital link with Western Australia.

It has been recognised for some time now that the Northern Territory will be faced with mounting costs for the rehabilitation of the existing sealed network. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a flurry of road construction under a conservative federal government. These roads were built to last 20 years and, in some cases, they have lasted longer. Now we are faced with a dilemma. At present, the rehabilitation and maintenance versus capital works funding ratio is 1:2. Inside the next 8 years, this ratio is expected to be

reversed by necessity - that is, the rehabilitation and maintenance of our existing sealed roads will demand approximately two-thirds of our allocated cash. With that in mind, the Territory government has had to make some tough decisions.

Given these federal cutbacks, there will be a 6-year delay in the rehabilitation of the Victoria Highway. That is not for an upgrading, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is just rehabilitation. The current inadequate standard of the highway's alignment and its susceptibility to flooding will remain. Similarly, our main north-south connection, the Stuart Highway, which links us with South Australia, is also facing a 6-year delay in upgrading to national standard. In the case of the Barkly Highway, which connects the Territory with Queensland, the delay is now 3 years. Originally, these projects were targeted for completion by the federal government in 1988, under the Australian Bicentennial Roads Program, for which every road user in Australia paid some 2¢ per litre of fuel purchased.

If the federal government is not pouring resources into the vital area of national highways, perhaps we could have expected to see an increase in funds in the newly-created national arterial roads area. In the Northern Territory, the national arterial category is simply a redirection of past state arterial funds. In 1987-88, state arterial funds totalled \$5.53m, but the combined state and national allocations for this year amount to \$4.99m, a drop of 9.8%. This directs the development of some of our major tourist roads, such as the Kakadu Highway, and precludes any serious attempt to boost regional development. All of us are aware of the enormous potential for areas around the Victoria River, in the Gulf, northwards to Gove and the Top End and, closer to Darwin, in places such as Litchfield Park. There is immense tourist potential, some of it virtually untapped. Sadly, however, these areas will have to wait.

We come back to Warren Snowdon's glorious announcement of the Hawke government's 10% increase in road funding. How convenient for him to neglect to mention that the Territory's share of this particular cake was, of course, nil. In fact, it is worse than nil because we suffered a reduction in real dollars compared with the amount we received last year. What empty rhetoric it becomes when the figures are examined! Mr Snowdon has made quite a habit of fiddling with the figures to support his dubious claims of winning deals for the Territory. He reminds us constantly of how he has lobbied hard with Cabinet and come up with the goodies. For instance, in November last year, we were told he had extracted an extra \$15m for the Territory in road funding. Once again, the Territory would have been inordinately grateful for this extra funding that Mr Snowdon had worked so hard at prising from the federal coffers. What a pity it was that that money did not exist. What a pity it was that the extra \$15m which Mr Snowdon referred to was in fact part of the existing federal allocation for Territory roads. What a pity it is that Mr Snowdon has done absolutely nothing to secure for the Territory the level of funding for Territory roads that we have had in the past but has sat back and twiddled his thumbs while Territory road funding has been cut savagely by the federal government. So much for his clout down south.

The Federal Bureau of Transport and Communications' 1987 Annual Report carried this assessment of where the national road system was heading: 'Only in the Northern Territory does the cost of preserving operational performance exceed current funding'. That was 2 years ago, and now our funds have been further reduced. It has been suggested that the Federal Transport Minister, Bob Brown, is currently withholding 5% of available funds to allocate at his own discretion. I strongly suggest that Mr Snowdon make urgent representation

to the federal minister to secure those funds and to get some results, instead of duping Territorians with another Snowdon snow job.

To conclude, topical as it seems, Mr Snowdon has issued a press release in today's NT News. Once again, he has failed to understand. He claims, in answer to a series of questions about Territory funding which has been outstanding for 18 months, that there was a 10% increase in federal funding for NT roads. Mr Deputy Speaker, that is a lie, and Mr Snowdon has put it in the newspaper. He has much to answer for. Amongst all of the answers, I want to hear one about a fair share of the cake in terms of road funding for Territorians. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, over the last few years, I have noticed that the nature of the content of ministerial statements has changed. Once upon a time, statements in this House used to be about positive developments that we could expect to transpire in the Northern Territory. Over the last couple of years, the trend has been different, and this statement is just another indication of that fact. More and more, ministerial statements are about fed-bashing, as if that is the key to holding government in the Northern Territory.

In this statement, the Minister for Transport and Works has perhaps dropped a couple of notches in comparison with his previous attempts to crucify the federal member. I do not deny him the right to say what he likes about the federal parliament and federal politics, but it would be nice to hear a statement from this minister or, indeed, any other minister, about something positive which they propose should happen at some time in the future, instead of this continuous litany of fed-bashing. They see that as the way to maintain power. If they see it as necessary in promoting the candidacy of Helen Galton, fair enough, but I would prefer that they did it in the popular press as opposed to using this House. If any logical person can read any more into the minister's statement than the fact that it is a political stunt, let that person stand up and say so.

I am quite realistic about this House being used for political purposes. Each of us is here for political purposes. I do not give a tinker's damn what political persuasion the federal government might be, but for all things foul to be blamed continually on the federal government in such a ridiculously negative way and to support such ridiculously negative political stunts is simply a waste of time.

Having said all that, recently I drove along the Barkly Highway into Queensland. I must say that, once I crossed into Queensland, the change in the road surface was noticeable. Mr Speaker, if you think we have lousy roads in the Northern Territory, you ought to drive into Queensland. To that extent, I certainly congratulate the Northern Territory government for having upgraded those roads.

In relation to all services in Australia, be they telecommunication services, road services, rail services or shipping services, we suffer from the same problem of the demography of this nation. We have a very small population inhabiting a vast land mass. That is the case also in the Northern Territory. It is a simple, hard fact of life. Roads are different in the extent to which they are generally funded directly from the public purse. There is not much in the way of user-pays for road construction or maintenance. In respect of telecommunications, there is an element of user-pays, but a great deal of cross-subsidisation is involved also. There is that element of user-pays, but telecommunications in this country are very



expensive. Road and rail networks are funded out of the public purse. I am sure the Chief Minister can tell us why we will not have a railway up here. It is simply because it would have to be funded out of the public purse.

Those are all general but unassailable facts of life in Australia and, more pertinently, in the Northern Territory. Federal government funding to the Northern Territory has never and will never reflect the revenue generated. In the Northern Territory, fuel taxes are used, among other things, for general purpose revenue. Some of the money goes back to road users but much does not. Than again, I defy any member of this House to say that the fines levied in courts are used in a directly proportional sense to run prisons.

The same is the case with a proportion of federal government taxes. It is a stupid waste of time to do so, but if you want to blame this particular federal government for that, go ahead. I certainly guarantee that the next federal government, no matter what its political persuasion, will be doing precisely the same thing. There is absolutely no point in even hypothesising about a potential change in that. Fuel levies or taxes are used to raise funds generally in Australia. Once again, that is a simple fact of life. There is no point in the minister or any member of government suggesting that that will change simply because the political flavour of a federal government will change.

The minister might perhaps find it more instructive and indeed more edifying to have a look at the federal opposition's policy on taxes and charges and the way that revenue is to be distributed throughout the community. I have not had a very close look at it but, from what I can understand from the federal opposition's launch of its taxation policy, there would be a reduction in revenue from taxation generally. If it cuts revenue, it will have to cut expenditure if it wants to balance the books. One does not have to be a mathematical giant to understand that. I assume that the federal opposition would intend to balance the books. I would assume that, among other areas, expenditure on roads would be cut. That is not an unreasonable prospect. It is a consequence of our living in a federal system where finances are redistributed to the territories and the states.

Where I disagree with the minister's statement most strongly is on the fact that his only and total solution to the road carnage in Australia - and it is nothing less than absolute carnage - is the upgrading of roads. I come from Nhulunbuy. Recently, our road through to Katherine was upgraded, and I am very thankful for that. I think it is a marvellous thing. It is interesting, however, to note that since it was upgraded, there has been almost a 300-fold increase in the number of accidents on that road simply because people can travel on the damn thing faster. When it was a bush track, accidents were virtually unheard of. Now, because people can travel faster, the number of accidents has gone through the roof, with roll-overs and head-on collisions. In that case, upgrading a road has increased the number of accidents. I would not claim for a second that that is a reflection on the difference between a sealed road and a gravel road. However, it is interesting to note the number of accidents that are now occurring on the road between Nhulunbuy and Katherine compared to the number which occurred before.

The factor that is killing more people on the roads than anything else is speed.

A member: And alcohol.

Mr LEO: Yes, and alcohol, and driver negligence. It is my simple belief that the major cause of accidents on the road is the drivers of motor vehicles. Road conditions certainly do play a part, but it is my belief that the people responsible for driving motor vehicles cause by far the largest number of road accidents in this country. The best way to reduce the number of motor vehicle accidents in this country is to improve driver behaviour. I believe that that is the best and most simple way of doing it.

I was a delegate for the Transport and Workers Union for many years. I used to come to Darwin to attend conferences and we used to meet regularly with owner drivers. They used to tell us about the pressures that they were under to drive extraordinarily long distances over long periods in order simply to meet their overheads. If the minister wants to be specific about heavy vehicles and owner drivers, I believe that the bulk of owner drivers are physically exhausted people. That is quite understandable, Mr Speaker, when you have a look at the number of miles they have to travel and the number of hours that they spend behind the wheel. I believe that contributes greatly to the number of accidents involving heavy vehicles. That is a simple fact of life. To that extent, I disagree with the minister about the way to reduce the number of accidents that heavy vehicles are involved in.

When travelling up the Barkly Highway and on to the Stuart Highway, even when I was parked by the side of the road, I was absolutely terrified by these monsters roaring past. They are terrifyingly large vehicles and they travel flat out. You do not have to be in another vehicle to be in danger. On occasion, I have seen the heaped carcasses of up to 8 beasts that have been hit at one time by a road train. All that remained was lumps of meat in the middle of the road. Mr Speaker, you have to ask yourself whether the state of the road really matters when vehicles like this can plough through 8 head of stock. Those simple conclusions occur to me as a logical consequence of what I have seen.

If the minister were fair dinkum about reducing the likelihood and, indeed, the number of accidents involving heavy vehicles, there would be far greater control placed on the manner in which their drivers use the roads in the Northern Territory. I believe that that is one way in which he could realistically reduce the number of road accidents. If the minister responsible for police were, in some way, to institute controls over the behaviour of drivers on these highways and on the our roads generally, that would have a great effect upon the number of accidents involving heavy vehicles. Also, in the case of smaller vehicles and the normal travelling public, I believe that the behaviour of drivers has more to do with motor vehicle accidents than does the state of the roads.

Amidst great controversy, random breath testing was introduced here. It was supposed to provide the universal panacea for road accidents within the Northern Territory. Of course, it can only ever be used effectively within built-up urban areas. I do not have to pick up the report from the Northern Territory Police Force to know that by far the greatest number of accidents causing deaths within the Northern Territory happen out on the open highways. I can understand that simply by reading the newspapers. If there were more stringent checks upon persons using the open highways, to ascertain their consumption of alcohol, and if that were done on a random basis, and if people paid proper regard to the manner in which they use the public highways, there would be a considerable effect in terms of reducing the number of motor vehicle accidents within the Northern Territory.

Simply to say that we can reduce the number of accidents by a percentage point by improving the standard of Australian roads is an absolute nonsense. The minister quoted a figure of 30%, but I believe that we could reduce the number of road accidents by 70% if road users were made more responsible for their behaviour. I do not believe that we can blame the federal government for our failure to insist that drivers use roads responsibly. I do not believe we can blame any government other than this one for failing to do that.

Mr Finch: Give us some practical solutions.

Mr LEO: The minister wants some practical solutions. If the number of road patrols along the Stuart Highway and the Barkly Highway were increased ...

Mr Finch: It covers 3000 km.

Mr LEO: I could park you within 20 km of any community along the Stuart Highway where, without any doubt, you would see at least 3 heavy vehicles breaking the speed limit within half an hour either side of midnight.

Mr Finch: Heavy vehicles are geared to 85 km/h. They are not the problem.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, either the minister is sadly deluded or I have not had to travel at something like 140 km/h to avoid being run down by one of those damn things chasing me up the highway.

Mr Finch: Road trains?

Mr LEO: Road trains.

Mr Finch: Rubbish!

Mr LEO: If my speedo is out by that much, I might as well give it away. On occasion, I have had to drive at 140 km/h to avoid being run over by one of the damn things that was chasing me. That is how fast I had to go.

Mr Speaker, if I cannot see 3 trucks driving dangerously within half an hour on either side of midnight on any night of the week within 20 km of any community along the Stuart Highway, I will give up now. It is a simple fact of life that trucks and heavy vehicles use those highways dangerously. Basically, the drivers are dangerous. It would not matter if they were on a 6-lane highway or a goat track, they would still drive dangerously. I am convinced of that.

The minister can continue to get up in this House and make statements for the sake of cheap politics but, if he wants to make a realistic dent in the carnage which occurs on our roads, I believe that his most reasonable chance of achieving that will be by simply controlling the behaviour of drivers on the roads a little more effectively.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the statement made by the Minister for Transport and Works. In so doing, I must say that, unfortunately, the opposition has once again missed a perfect opportunity to demonstrate that it actually cares about matters of direct concern to the Northern Territory.

The member for Nhulunbuy can run away. He has done a very good job for the opposition. He has worked very hard for 20 minutes to try to obfuscate the fundamentals of this debate by trying to divert attention from the issue of road funding and road development and onto the issue of trucks on the Stuart Highway. No one denies the problems caused by speeding trucks, poor driving and drink-driving. Many factors contribute to accidents.

Unfortunately for the member for Nhulunbuy, this statement deals with the issue of funding and our ability to maintain roads in a safe condition. I do not know anybody who knows anything about road funding and road safety who denies that roads properly maintained and of an appropriate standard are vitally important to road safety and reducing road accident rates. That seems to be irrelevant to the member for Nhulunbuy. It is sad that he allows himself to be sidetracked in his vain attempt to consider the interests of the Australian Labor Party, both federally and in the Northern Territory, ahead of those of people in the Northern Territory and the Northern Territory's budget. He ignores the question of the Northern Territory people's ability to meet their needs.

The minister's statement is all about the fact that the Northern Territory is receiving desperately bad treatment from the Commonwealth. That is the issue, together with the failure of our federal member to stand up for Northern Territory people when he deals with his federal colleagues. The minister's speech demonstrated clearly that the Northern Territory has received reduced funding in the face of increased funding for the states of Australia. He quoted budget figures which put the matter beyond dispute. However, that is irrelevant to the honourable member opposite and to our federal member. In today's newspaper, the man who was elected to represent the people of the Northern Territory in the federal parliament has tried to confuse the people of the Territory by claiming that there has been a 10% funding increase from the federal government for roads. Certainly, there is a 10% increase in funds nationally, but there is a 2% reduction in funds for the Northern Territory. That is what this debate is about, and that is what the shadow spokesman has failed to address.

Yet again, it is a crystal clear demonstration of why the Australian Labor Party is in absolutely no shape to present itself as being in any way suitable to take the Treasury benches, because its members will not stand up for the Territory. They defend their party over and above everything, and that is their failing. They are still locked in. They have to toe the party line. A federal Labor government kicks the hell out of the Northern Territory, and its Northern Territory Labor mates jump to its defence. We hear it day in and day out in this House, and today we have heard yet another attempt to do that.

The member for Nhulunbuy sought to criticise the minister for drawing this situation to the attention of the House, and tried to trivialise the debate as yet another example of fed-bashing. If our federal member actually did his job and started fed-bashing himself in the interests of the Territory people, maybe there would be less necessity for us to do it in this House. Somebody has to stand up for the people of the Territory and, if our federal member will not do it, we will have to do it for him, because the Northern Territory people deserve better than this.

I quote from the minister's speech where he referred to the 1987 federal Bureau of Transport and Communications Annual Report: 'Only in the Northern Territory does the cost of preserving operational performance exceed current funding'. That was in 1987 and, since then, cuts in Northern Territory road funding have again exceeded those in the rest of Australia, so what was wrong

in 1987 is worse today, yet the members opposite and our federal Labor member are defending the federal government. They are doing no better than John Reeves did when he sat in Canberra. He sold us out on the railway, on general purpose funding to the Northern Territory and on the Darwin Airport. Now we have this current Mr Nobody federal member in Canberra doing exactly the same thing and continuing this disgraceful performance of seeing the Territory sold out.

Mr Speaker, you know that the Country Liberal Party does not play games like that. When the conservative parties were in power, the CLP kicked the federal government just as hard when it acted against the interests of the Northern Territory. That was because we wanted to stand up for the people of the Northern Territory, and that is a fundamental difference between the Country Liberal Party and the Australian Labor Party. That is why the Labor Party can never be allowed to govern, and why we must move to get rid of the man who is our federal representative, who is doing so much damage by standing down there pretending that this is really good for the Northern Territory. He is trying to con the people of the Northern Territory.

Today, in the NT News, he is again saying that road funding has been increased by 10%. That is true in Australia but not in the Northern Territory, where there has been a 2% cut. The minister outlined numerous examples to demonstrate where those cuts have occurred in different forms of funding. We know that is happening. Why cannot somebody on the opposite benches stand up for once and attack the opposition's federal colleagues, and do something to support the people of the Northern Territory? Clearly, Mr Nobody, our federal member, is in no position to do anything except kowtow to his federal mates, and he will do nothing. He will defend them. He has ceased to be the Northern Territory representative in Canberra. He has become Canberra's representative in the Northern Territory. That is what this debate is about. Once again, the opposition has failed to stand up for the people of the Territory.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, we heard the member for Nhulunbuy acting as an apologist for Hon Warren Snowdon. He claimed that the Minister for Transport and Works had been fed-bashing. I sat and listened to the diatribe that he was spewing forth and I thought: what nonsense! Talk about fed-bashing. What about Northern Territory bashing, Mr Speaker? Time after time, we hear these people who sit on the opposite benches bashing the Northern Territory, particularly the Northern Territory government, and they know full well that what they are doing is undermining confidence in the Northern Territory, not just locally but nationally and internationally. Do they take any notice of that? No, Mr Speaker, not at all. But, when we choose, quite rightly, to lay some blame for the ongoing reduction in funding to the Northern Territory at the feet of the federal member, Hon Warren Snowdon, don't they kick and squeal, Mr Speaker? They sure do.

It is a fact that, in the 6 years that the federal Labor government has been in power - and, of course, Hon Warren Snowdon has been our local member for about 3 of those years - federal funding to the Northern Territory has been reduced by 26% or thereabouts, and it is most likely that we will cop it in the neck again next year. If the indications that we see almost daily, about the dire straits in which our national economy finds itself, are anything to go by, we are sure to cop it in the neck once again. However, the member for Nhulunbuy stood up and defended Hon Warren Snowdon who, in my opinion, has failed miserably to represent the Northern Territory's interests in Canberra and who instead, as the Minister for Health and Community Services said a moment ago, has ended up acting as a federal representative in the

Northern Territory, as indeed did his Labor predecessor, John Reeves, when he was our federal member. Mr Speaker, do you remember that he used to be called John Who? Did he represent the Northern Territory in Canberra? No, Mr Speaker, because exactly the same thing happened to him as has happened to Hon Warren Snowdon. He became an apologist for his federal mates down there and, of course, these people across this Chamber on the Labor Party opposition benches are just as big apologists as is Mr Snowdon.

The member for Nhulunbuy went on to say that Northern Territory roads were better than those in Queensland. Of course they are better, selectively better, and I am referring in part to our main arterial roads, the Stuart Highway and the Barkly Highway. But even they are not up to scratch in parts. They are not up to the double carriageway standard that we want to have, and one of the reasons why they are not is because, progressively over these last 6 years, we have seen our funding for road construction decline and decline. We wanted to have that double carriageway in place by this time but, because of the reduction in funding, it has not been possible. So, whilst we have some very good main arterial roads, specifically the 2 that I mentioned, I hasten to point out that the Victoria Highway, which is part of Highway No 1, is in an abysmal state. It has only a 3.7 m wide sealed area, and I would suggest to the member for Nhulunbuy that, if he would like to park his car on the side of the road there, he would really have something to worry about - far more so than if he parked on the Barkly or the Stuart Highway as he indicated that he had done in the past.

The honourable minister indicated that the Northern Territory has a vast road network, some 28 500 km, of which only 5700 km is sealed. If we compare the Northern Territory situation with that of the states, we will find that the states have a much larger percentage of sealed road than the Northern Territory. One of the reasons for the concentration of our efforts on bringing the Stuart and Barkly Highways up to double carriageway standard is because they are our lifelines. Mr Speaker, you have been here for a long time. Do you remember what those roads were like prior to self-government? They were no better than the Victoria Highway is now and, in fact, they were probably worse. I can recall travelling on both of those roads in 1964 or 1965. They were very narrow indeed.

The member for Nhulunbuy talked about the speed at which road trains travel. I can recall trying to overtake a road train near Newcastle Waters on that particular trip. My little Ford Prefect ute, with mum and 2 kids in the front and the dog in the back, would do 45 mph flat out downhill. I was trying to overtake a road train drawing a couple of dogs while it was snaking down the hill outside Newcastle Waters. I reckon it took me 30 minutes to get past it. It was quite incredible. These days, I travel the Stuart Highway on a fairly regular basis and I do not have any difficulty at all overtaking road trains as and when necessary. There is no way in the world that they travel at the speeds that the honourable member suggested.

In a previous debate, we heard the sad scenario about how the federal government will slash our housing funding in a couple of years time. Did we receive any support from Labor members on the other side of the House? Once again, all they wanted to do was to defend the position of their federal colleagues. Have we heard anything from Mr Snowdon about this? We have not, Mr Speaker. Where is Mr Snowdon? He has got his head as far down as he can possibly get it.

We heard how the honourable federal member advised with great glee earlier this year about a 10% increase in federal funding. There is to be a

\$120m increase on a national basis. That sounds pretty good. I do not have in front of me the form of words that the minister used but, reading between the lines, what it really meant was that that money would be spent in the areas where the votes are. In other words, it would be spent in the most densely-populated areas where members of the Australian Labor Party can make good guys of themselves and win a few more votes. I will bet that the majority of that money will be spent in marginal seats within the more densely populated areas. Regrettably, even though this is a marginal seat in the Northern Territory, we have been bypassed because we have had a 25% reduction in our funding level. While funding for the rest of Australia has risen by 10%, we are down the gurgler by 25%. In fact, we are down to about \$20m. When you are building a road to the standard that we have in the better parts of the Stuart and Barkly Highways, how many kilometres do you get for \$20m? Not many at all. What that means is that it will be many years before we see both of those highways and the Victoria Highway improved to the standards that we are looking for. That totally neglects about 22 000 km of road in the Northern Territory which is currently unsealed and which, generally speaking, is in a fairly poor state.

The member for Nhulunbuy claimed that the upgrading of the access road into Nhulunbuy had increased the number of accidents. If that is the case, the increase in the number of accidents is driver related. It has nothing to do with the fact that the road has improved. However, I accept his point that, because the road was so poor before, people travelled at such a slow speed that it was probably very difficult to have an accident. Now that it has been upgraded, people are travelling faster and the risk has increased. We want to upgrade our roads and we need to upgrade our roads. The people of electorates like Nhulunbuy and Arnhem are demanding an improvement in the standard of the roads to allow them easy access in and out of their respective areas.

There is no doubt that there is horrendous carnage on the roads in Australia. One of the greatest reasons for this is the decrease in funding for roads allocated by the federal government. We have all heard that, of the 23¢ or 24¢ per litre that it is gaining in fuel tax, it is spending only about 3¢ per litre per day on upgrading roads. Because motor vehicles are much faster, much more highly geared and far less strong in their construction than they used to be, we see them torn apart. They are really tin cans. There is no strength in the bodywork of those motor vehicles at all. They have probably done away with the standard chassis that motor vehicles used to have years ago. If you jumped on the bonnet of a Holden or a Falcon 20 years ago, you would be flat out trying to dent it. If you lean against a modern car, it will just about collapse under you.

What I am saying is that, whilst the speed of cars has increased, the strength of cars has decreased. At the same time, the standard of the road surfaces upon which we insist that these vehicles drive at increased speed has not kept up with advanced motor vehicle technology. That is the problem. In New South Wales, we have seen some horrendous accidents in the last couple of months. Semitrailers, buses and dense traffic travel at high speeds on very narrow roads. Very unwisely, people try to overtake under those conditions. The result is very predictable. Because of the decrease in road funding, the standard of our roads has not kept up with the increasing standard of technology in our motor vehicles.

Instead of sinking the money from the fuel tax into Consolidated Revenue to shore up some of its other programs, mainly in the area of welfare, the federal government should be putting that money where it rightly belongs and

spending it for the purpose for which the tax was originally introduced: to improve the standard of roads right throughout Australia. As part of that, the Northern Territory expects to get its fair and reasonable share of funding, and we are not getting it at the moment.

Mr VALE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I will be very brief, but there are a couple of points I would like to raise. It is only 10 short years since even moderate rains throughout the Northern Territory would throw the whole of the road transport system into utter chaos. Areas such as Newcastle Waters would be shut down for days at a time. South of the Northern Territory border, between Kulgera and Port Augusta, the Stuart Highway would be cut for days, weeks or even months. Train lines were washed out. Slowly and surely, roads have been upgraded and sealed to all-weather standard. I must pay great tribute, not only to those Northern Territory ministers and federal ministers responsible, but to all the highly-qualified engineers and road builders in the Department of Transport and Works who have spent so many hours of unstinting duty to bring the transport system in the Territory up to a reasonable standard.

Having said that, whilst much has been achieved, there is still a great deal to be done. In the Northern Territory, I think it is somewhat unfortunate that at least 2 of the Australian Labor Party members of parliaments, the member for Stuart and the federal member, obviously do not know what is going on or what is occurring with roads. Indeed, I remember one of the first speeches the member for Stuart made here, in 1983 or 1984. He said that, really, no roads had been sealed in the Stuart electorate since World War II. However, as the previous member for Stuart, I remember projects such as the Tanami Highway, the Plenty Highway, the widening of the Stuart Highway through the foothills, the Ross Highway out to the east, the road out to Glen Helen and many others including all the roads at the Yuendumu township itself. If the member for Stuart was not aware of what roads had been sealed in his own electorate, it is small wonder that now he is hardly able to make adequate or responsible representation at a federal level to his federal colleagues.

I believe that one of the most disgraceful occurrences that took place with federal road funding was that which occurred in relation to the Bicentennial levy, which was supposed to take 2¢ a litre from the sale of motor spirits and diesel to be paid directly, not into Consolidated Revenue, but into a trust fund and allocated to a national road program in consultation with the various state and territory ministers. The legislation was quite specific. It said 2¢ per litre was to be paid into this trust fund. On achieving office, the Hawke government decided to index everything it could get its hands on, including the Bicentennial roads money. The argument was that the legislation said 2¢ a litre only was to go into the trust fund, and so anything over and above that would go into Consolidated Revenue. By that sleight of hand, over \$100m was raised through the Bicentennial levy, and not a single cent of it found its way back into road funding. That was a great tragedy. That money could have been divided equally between the states and the territories and would have provided a great boost to our road funding in the Northern Territory.

Having said that, and having said that we have achieved a great deal in 10 short years, there are still a great number of roads to be sealed or upgraded as a priority. Probably the Victoria Highway is one that needs and, indeed, is receiving attention from the Northern Territory government. Continuation of funding is obviously needed for: the completion of the road to Ross River; the Hermannsburg Road; the Tanami, ultimately right out to the



border; and, last but certainly not least - and I can see the minister giving me sideways looks - the Plenty Highway out to the Queensland border. Ultimately, that will become a major arterial road for Queenslanders travelling through to the Northern Territory and, indeed, for Territorians going through to Queensland. I am advised by the Department of Transport and Works that, once that is sealed, it will cut something like 12 hours travel time for people leaving Darwin and going into Queensland on holidays, rather than their going across the Barkly. Our section of the road is partly sealed, gravelled and upgraded although there is some work still to be done, but that horrific section of road between the NT border and Boulia urgently needs major attention by the Queensland government. Despite extensive lobbying and pressure put on Queensland in recent years, the poor old Boulia Shire still has not received adequate funding to get that stretch of road upgraded. Whilst I may not be here to see it, ultimately that will become a major arterial road. As honourable members from central Australia would be aware, it is a very scenic drive for at least as far out as 50 or 60 miles the other side of Harts Range.

As I said before it is indeed unfortunate that, when he entered this Assembly, the member for Stuart was and still is ill-informed about the number of roads that are sealed in his electorate, but it is equally tragic that his federal colleague, Mr Snowdon, has made few or no statements about under-funding although every so often he announces government grants to the Territory. He does not go on to explain that, even so, funding has been cut back drastically.

As a final point, I did not believe what I was heard when the member for Nhulunbuy got up and did not talk about the state of roads, but proceeded to slam damn near every driver in the Northern Territory. He said that they were terrible drivers and used that as a kind of backhanded excuse for the lack of federal funding. Mr Speaker, if you look at the statistics of accidents in the Northern Territory, the vast distances and the condition of our roads, the comments of the member for Nhulunbuy slamming Territory drivers were most unfortunate and unfair.

Mr Speaker, I support the statement.

Debate adjourned.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Power and Water Authority Amendment Bill (Serial 236) and the Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment Bill (Serial 241): (a) being presented and read a first time together and one motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee report stage and the third readings of the bills together, and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

POWER AND WATER AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 236)  
WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 241)

Bills presented and read a first time.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a second time.

These legislative amendments are a prelude to the introduction of new customer services, policies and procedures which will align terms and conditions applying to power, water and sewerage services. Early in the new year, the Power and Water Authority will introduce more efficient meter reading and billing procedures. Instead of 2 meter readers visiting the same property, 1 to read the electricity meter and 1 to read the water meter, 1 meter reader will read both meters on the same visit. Instead of 2 bills being sent out to customers who are responsible for paying for both electricity and water/sewerage services at a property, only 1 bill will be sent out. The Power and Water Authority was established with precisely these objectives in mind. The authority has now developed a computer system that will combine the billing processes for power and water and sewerage services.

The amendments have been introduced to enable legislative inconsistencies relating to billing terms and conditions to be removed from the Water Supply and Sewerage Act and regulations, and the by-laws to the Electricity Act. The existing legislation was developed to reflect the administrative arrangements developed by the organisations formerly responsible for the functions now combined in the Power and Water Authority. The existing acts, having been developed at different times and under separate instructions, and using different models, are inconsistent in regard to the prescription of billing terms and conditions.

Electricity services have long been administered within the framework of a statutory authority. Accordingly, the determination of electricity billing terms and conditions has been a matter for the minister and the authority, with by-laws issued from time to time. On the other hand, historically, water and sewerage terms and conditions have been administered within the framework of a government department. The amendments to the Water Supply and Sewerage Act have the effect of deleting terms and conditions relating to water and sewerage services, which are set out in some detail in the Water Supply and Sewerage Act in a manner that does not apply to electricity services.

The amendments to the Power and Water Authority Act are consequential to the existing powers of the authority as prescribed in section 15(2)(c) of the act. This section empowers the authority to determine the conditions, other than tariffs, upon or subject to which electricity, water, gas or sewerage will be supplied by the authority. The government has determined that section 15 of the Power and Water Authority Act should be expanded to define the scope of the general discriminatory power contained in section 15(2)(c).

It is consistent with the government's approach to deregulation that the administrative arrangements relating to billing terms and conditions be removed from the Water Supply and Sewerage Act. Mr Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will seek the suspension of standing orders to allow the bills to pass through all stages during these sittings, and I commend the bills to the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 238)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to repeal section 61 of the Summary Offences Act and replace it with a new section 61 which deals more comprehensively with the offence of possession of suspected stolen property. The bill rectifies defects with the current section and expands the scope of the actual offence. Existing section 61 of the Summary Offences Act provides that the offence is not completed until the suspect fails in court to give a satisfactory explanation as to how she or he came by the property. Under the proposed new section 61, the explanation of how she or he came by the property shall be a defence to the offence rather than being part of the actual offence.

The amendment bill also clarifies the type of goods which may come within the offence. It includes not only goods suspected of being stolen but also goods that have been otherwise unlawfully obtained, for example, alcohol obtained by an unlicensed sale. The bill also expands the type of possession of goods which constitutes the offence. It is expanded from physical possession by the offender of property suspected of being stolen to include personal property in the custody of another person or kept on any premises. In addition, the bill creates an offence when a person gives goods, reasonably suspected of being stolen, to another person not lawfully entitled to them. The amendment widens the types of goods which fall within the offence by providing a definition of personal property which includes cash, cheques or moneys in a bank account.

The amendment makes it clear that it is not necessary for the suspicion that the goods are stolen and the actual possession of the goods to occur at the same time. This recognises that, in most cases, some checking of police records is necessary before a reasonable suspicion can be founded that the goods have been stolen.

Lastly, in relation to police disposal of goods obtained in the commission of the offence, the amendment repeals the current section 61(4) altogether, because this procedure is already contained in section 166 of the Police Administration Act.

In summary, the amendment bill creates a more comprehensive offence to deal with persons suspected of having stolen property. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 240)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The main purpose of this bill is to enable conditions to be imposed on the release of a person detained as an habitual criminal. I would remind honourable members that the objectives of habitual criminal provisions are twofold: first, to protect the public - and the cases make it quite clear that that is the most important objective - and, second, the reformation of the criminal.

Section 393 of the Criminal Code provides that a person who has been convicted on a number of occasions may be declared by a judge of the Supreme Court to be an habitual criminal. When a person has been declared to be an habitual criminal, he or she is detained in prison during the Administrator's pleasure. A person detained as an habitual criminal may apply to the Supreme Court for a recommendation that he or she be discharged. The Administrator has a discretion whether or not to discharge the person and whether or not to order the person to report to the police for up to 2 years. Save for reporting to the police, no condition can be imposed.

The Supreme Court has recently recommended the discharge of an habitual criminal. In recommending discharge, the judge said: 'It is unfortunate that the Administrator cannot impose conditions on his release. An ordinary prisoner is subject to release on conditions'. The court's recommendation was not accepted on the grounds that, in the absence of a power to impose conditions, it was not safe to release the person.

It is generally accepted that longer-term prisoners should be helped to make the transition from a prison environment to the ordinary community. There is no good reason why habitual criminals, who will usually have undergone substantial sentences, should not receive the same assistance and treatment as do all other longer-term prisoners. In addition, where there are competing interests, the protection of the public versus the right of the individual, it is fairer to provide for release subject to conditions as this will prevent a person from being detained for longer than is necessary. On the other hand, if things start to go wrong, it is in the interests of both the community and the offender that the offender should be returned to prison quickly. The community can be protected and the offender is also protected by preventing him or her from committing an offence for which they would inevitably be detained for many more years.

Mr Speaker, the government is aware that some people think the power to detain habitual criminals should not exist at all. The argument is that a person should not be punished for crimes which have not been committed. That is a legitimate argument to put forward, but it is not one which the government finds persuasive. It has to be recognised that the threat of detention as an habitual criminal is ultimately the only weapon with which to deter professional or compulsive criminals. What we are dealing with is hardened criminals who have probably committed a whole series of offences. In short, there comes a point in time when the protection of the public outweighs the interests of the individual. I might add that the court has exercised power in this regard on only 2 occasions during the last 10 years.

Victoria has repealed its habitual criminal provisions and I understand that the Commonwealth is thinking of doing so too, but all other jurisdictions have retained them. They are a useful last line of defence and this government, like most other governments, believes that they should be retained.

In theory, any prisoner can be released subject to conditions under prerogative powers pursuant to section 432 of the Criminal Code. The government has examined this option and found that it is not suitable. First, the section is tied to dealing with a person in breach of conditions 'in all respects in the same manner as a person conditionally released by a court of trial'. To deal with an habitual criminal in the same way as a person released on bond is not appropriate. As we all know, frequently the courts excuse breaches of bond. On most occasions, they will be giving first offenders a second chance. This, of course, is completely proper, but we need

a tighter regime when dealing with habitual criminals who will almost certainly have already had many 'second' chances. Secondly, a person released subject to conditions under prerogative powers would still have the right to apply to a court for a discharge under section 399. Obviously, this could put the court in a most difficult position as it might have to comment on the way prerogative powers were being exercised. It is clearly much better and more logical to enable conditions to be imposed within the structure of the existing section 399.

The role which the court now performs in making recommendations to the Administrator is, strictly speaking, an administrative one. There is, therefore, an argument for saying that an administrative body, for example the Parole Board, ought to be substituted for the court. On the other hand, it can be fairly argued that the circumstances of detention as an habitual criminal are exceptional, and that an habitual criminal's rights can best be protected by giving him the opportunity to argue his case in open court.

As honourable members are aware, the whole Criminal Code is being reviewed. Therefore, the government does not propose to change the status quo with this bill but will give the matter further thought in the wider review. However, the opportunity has been taken to make some minor changes to the structure of the habitual criminal provisions. At the moment, if a person required to report to police fails to do so, or commits an offence in the Territory punishable by 6 months imprisonment during the reporting period, he can be recommitted to prison. I have no problem with that. However, if a person commits an offence outside the Territory, he can be recommitted to prison only if he returns to the Territory. If he does ever return, he must be recommitted, even if it is 20 or 30 years later. That certainly is not very sensible.

What is required is a more flexible regime under which the Territory can, but is not obliged to, extradite a person who is released subject to conditions and commits an offence interstate. If a person commits a serious offence, of course, he will be imprisoned and very possibly declared to be an habitual criminal in that state. If a person commits a very minor offence, then the Territory need take no action. Amendments to give effect to this more sensible approach, together with formal powers of arrest, are contained in clause 5. The government has taken the opportunity also to insert a formal requirement that annual reports are made on habitual criminals. This is reflected in clause 5.

Mr Speaker, I have already indicated that an application for discharge has been rejected recently, and explained why. The government has no wish to keep anyone in prison for longer than is necessary, if it is safe to release the person subject to conditions. As a matter of fairness, the government believes that the person I have referred to should be given the opportunity again to apply for his release, this time subject to conditions, as soon as possible. For this reason, the government believes it is appropriate that this bill pass through all stages at these sittings. I foreshadow that I will be moving for the suspension of standing orders at a later stage.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

CROWN LANDS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 237)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, as you are aware, the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister signed a Memorandum of Agreement on 7 September 1989 dealing with the grant of community living areas on pastoral properties. Under this agreement, the Territory was to legislate to establish a process which would enable the grant of title for living areas. We have done so.

As its part of the agreement, the Commonwealth is to commence amendments previously passed in respect of land claims to stock routes and reserves, to make certain amendments to those provisions and to schedule as Aboriginal land a limited number of the areas subject to claim. In this regard, the Commonwealth's Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Amendment Bill was introduced into the House of Representatives on 3 November 1989 and has passed to the Senate to be dealt with. It was unfortunate that the Commonwealth included in its bill controversial and poorly drafted amendments, including those relating to mining on Aboriginal land and commercial dealings by land councils. I am pleased, however, that the Commonwealth has responded to representations by the Territory by either removing or redrafting the offending clauses.

There remains one area of concern. That relates to a clause in the Commonwealth bill providing access across alienated Crown land to scheduled areas of Aboriginal land. I certainly do not deny that there should be provision ensuring access to scheduled areas. Such provision is sensible and necessary. However, the access provisions in the Commonwealth bill affect land leased from the Territory, not land granted by the Commonwealth. If the Commonwealth proceeds with the amendment as proposed in its legislation, I would regard it as an intrusion into a province which is clearly the responsibility of this Legislative Assembly. Accordingly, the Chief Minister has advised the Commonwealth by letter that the Territory is prepared to put before this Assembly an appropriate amendment to the Crown Lands Act and he has requested the Commonwealth to remove the offending clause from its bill. This bill honours the Territory's commitment as proposed in that letter, ensures that its legislative powers are not infringed and, importantly, ensures access to scheduled areas.

Turning to the bill, I can advise that the amendments follow very closely the Commonwealth legislation proposed in this area. The legislation itself is straightforward. As regards the most important functional provision, honourable members should refer to clause 5 which proposes new section 102P. Where there is no practical way of accessing the scheduled area other than by crossing a lease, a person is entitled to cross the lease by a route agreed between the lessee and the relevant land council or, failing agreement, a route determined by the Community Living Areas Tribunal. For this purpose, the tribunal is to be constituted by just 1 person: the chairman. This will allow for early determinations.

Importantly, the tribunal must ensure as far as possible that any access does not unduly interfere with the lessee's legitimate enjoyment or use of the land. Further, a road used for access by virtue of this provision shall not be taken as being road to which the public has a right of way.

Mr Speaker, in order to allow this matter to be completed in conjunction with our agreement with the Commonwealth, I foreshadow that I shall be introducing a motion to suspend so much of standing orders as would prevent this bill being passed during the course of these sittings.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

COMMUNITY WELFARE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 228)  
SEXUAL OFFENCES (EVIDENCE AND PROCEDURE) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 229)

Continued from 18 October 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I indicate at the outset of my comments that the opposition broadly supports these cognate bills. There are, however, some issues which I want to canvass in the context of the second-reading debate.

I note that the intent of the bills is to discourage the identification of minors who may be involved in child abuse cases or, indeed, of other people who may be involved in sexual offence cases. The basic intent of the legislation is to increase the penalties in that regard. The opposition wholeheartedly endorses that aspect of the bills. There have been a few celebrated cases recently which, in one sense, run parallel to the intent of these bills. Mr Speaker, you will recall the contempt of court cases in which the broadcaster Mr Derryn Hinch has been involved where, contrary to court orders, he has revealed the identity of some people who are either charged or are likely to be charged with offences. These bills do not deal with people who are charged. The identity of such people may or may not be suppressed by the court at different stages of proceedings and that is essentially a different issue.

What is a related issue is the identity of victims, often young children, whose lives certainly are scarred to some degree, and often in a disastrous fashion, because of the offences that have been perpetrated. At the least, they can be protected by their identity not being revealed. The amendment to the Sexual Offences (Evidence and Procedure) Act will increase the penalty for the identification of such people, in the case of an individual, from \$500 to \$1000 and, in the case of a body corporate, a newspaper or a radio or television station, from \$2000 to \$20 000. I will not go into the question of the appropriateness of increased penalties for bodies corporate and the extent to which they do or do not act as a deterrent, but I remind honourable members of those attendant issues.

In the Community Welfare Amendment Bill a specific offence is created. This represents a policy change rather than simply an increase in penalties. It creates the offence of disclosing information through which children can be identified. This corroborates the situation at the moment, where the identities of children involved in various processes under the Community Welfare Act are usually quite anonymous. That is quite appropriate because they deal with circumstances in which the nurturing framework of a family has broken down or, in some cases, may have been non-existent from the day the child was born. In those circumstances, the state has a role to play and the Community Welfare Act is a framework within which those protective processes are carried out.

I will refer, in passing, to a comment made to me by a senior officer involved in the administration of the Community Welfare Act, to the effect that one of the findings of the Commonwealth's study into homeless young people was that many of those young people had been wards of the state or whatever is the appropriate term in different places. Many of those people who came to the attention of the Commonwealth government were people for whom the process of being declared wards of the state and perhaps being put out for adoption or nurturing in state-run homes had not been successful. They had gravitated to a status of being street kids with all the attendant dangers that that implies.

I mention, in passing, that consideration has to be given to how well our nurturing processes for these people are working. I want to put in a strong plug for the family. I believe that many people who are involved in providing welfare services have a very strong belief in supporting the family. However, I suspect at times that there are some people working in the community welfare services area who believe, basically, that the family is a pathological institution and that it has a pretty poor record for nurturing children. As I mentioned before, the figures that have come out of the child homelessness study, the Burdekin Report being a result of that particular study, indicated quite the contrary. The fact is that state interference is not as successful as family nurture. I believe that family nurture should be supported. That is worth mentioning in these debates where it is so easy to concentrate on individuals and to ignore the natural supportive mechanisms which the family provides.

I hasten to reassure the minister, once again, that I am not opposed to the creation of the offence of disclosing information in this way. My concern is about a number of cases in which parents have felt as though they have not been dealt with fairly in relation to accusations made against them of abuse of their children. There was the celebrated Middlesborough case in the United Kingdom that received a great deal of press. A family was effectively destroyed because of the accusations made about the father having had anal sex with all his children. It was proved subsequently that the test that suggested that anal sex had been carried out was quite a faulty test. It caused a great deal of embarrassment to sections of the medical profession.

Coming closer to home, in his second-reading speech, the honourable minister mentioned a case in the Territory. He said:

There have been instances when the media has published explicit details about a situation where it would not be difficult in our small Territory communities to identify the persons involved. In one case the name of the family was actually published.

A couple of issues arise there. I am not sure whether the particular case to which the honourable minister referred was one in which I received representations myself, but I think there are points to be made. Firstly, the minister is rightly concerned about the identification of the children and the family involved. If the case is the case that I was made aware of, the newspaper involved had not made an active decision to identify the family involved, let alone the individuals involved. It happened inadvertently. I will not explain the circumstances because I do not want to make it easier to identify the particular case. I accept that it is not desirable that children or families who become the subject of community welfare cases be identified.

The second point, and one which the minister passed over in his comments, relates to the circumstance in which parents find themselves in the



Middlesborough situation, where they actively and passionately believe that they are being unjustly accused of abuse of their children. I do not think that I need to remind honourable members of the depth of feeling that is involved in these sorts of issues. I do not think that there can be very many issues which we can feel more deeply about than, firstly, our children themselves and, secondly, accusations that we do not care for them. I have every sympathy for parents who may be wrongly accused. Obviously, I have an absolute abhorrence of physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children. That goes without saying. However - and I have mentioned this in debate in this Assembly before - the state has to be very careful when it makes those accusations. Often, it is the more junior members of the community welfare system who are required to make on-the-spot judgments about the involvement or otherwise of parents. My point is not to oppose this amendment but to remind the minister that, if we are to remove from parents who believe themselves to be unjustly accused the avenue of appeal to the press, and so stifling a means of putting forward their views, we may bring about even greater violence than that which we are seeking to prevent.

I accept that the government has put forward this proposal in a quite genuine and appropriate effort to protect the identity of people who deserve protection. However, given the interest and concern expressed about the minority of arbitrary decisions made by welfare authorities, I wonder to what extent that has been taken into consideration in the framing of this particular bill. I am not satisfied that, in all cases, recourse is available. I do not want my comments to be construed as criticism of hard-working community welfare workers, but I do want to draw to the attention of the minister the need for balance in respect of these matters.

I return briefly to the question of offences by corporations. I mentioned before that I was not intending to debate the pros and cons of the increased penalties for an offence by a body corporate. I point out to the honourable minister that interstate, at least in the case of New South Wales, the fine is far higher than that the minister is proposing.

Mr Hatton: I said it in my speech if you read it: \$50 000.

Mr BELL: I pick up the interjection from the Minister for Health and Community Services. I note that he did refer to the New South Wales maximum in his second-reading speech. If I read him correctly, he says that the public would construe such amounts as excessive. I do not propose to canvass the question of what constitutes a deterrent and what does not. I do not believe that there have been any prosecutions in the Territory under that section since self-government so we are essentially arguing in vacuo. Basically, I do not accept the minister's argument. It is like the argument about maximum amounts for crimes compensation. If a \$50 000 ceiling is good enough in Victoria and New South Wales, why is it not good enough in the Northern Territory? I stick by my point. I do not see why the penalty for corporate offences should be lower in the Northern Territory than elsewhere.

I offer those comments to the Minister for Health and Community Services for consideration in his deliberations on this bill and I look forward to a more balanced assessment of the situation of the various parties involved in processes under the Community Welfare Act.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to contribute to this debate today as a result of a couple of incidents that I have been involved with over the last several months. For me, they have highlighted the need to incorporate in this legislation processes which provide recourse for those

families whose names or reputations are damaged as a result of inappropriate administration by the department.

I will not mention any names, but I will bring to the minister's attention 2 cases in relation to which I corresponded with his predecessor. The administration of these matters was unbelievably clumsy and very damaging to the parties concerned. What surprised me most, given the circumstances, was that the families involved did not receive so much as an apology or an assurance that such a circumstance would not occur again.

The first case involved a gentleman, his wife and his son of about 10 or 12 years. They were living in a home in Tennant Creek. During the absence of the parents one afternoon, a welfare officer entered the house and took the child away on the grounds that he did not believe the parents were fit people to be looking after children. There was no dialogue with the parents, nothing. The parents came home to find that their child was gone. Eventually, they recovered the child from the welfare officer. The gentleman concerned made a complaint to me which I forwarded to the minister's predecessor. Despite the fact that the complaint was made in writing, absolutely nothing was done about it. The man's reputation, in a small town like that, suffered unbelievable damage. The action by the officer was outrageous. Even more appalling, the department shrugged the matter off as though it was just one of those things that happen and which people have to live with.

Under the circumstances, I would have thought that it perfectly reasonable for the department at least to conduct an interview with the family and listen to the complaint, and to try to satisfy those involved that what had occurred was out of the ordinary. All that happened was that, in the course of time, the officer concerned found other employment in another place and was encouraged to take it. That was how the matter was dealt with.

The parents believed that they had a right to some recourse that would give them an opportunity to clear their name. The opportunity for that does not exist under the act. There is no way parents can obtain recourse against such an officer because, at the end of the day, the officer can just skip town and leave everybody holding the bag if the parents want to commence criminal proceedings.

The second incident was a little more complex. A child happened to say at school, in show and tell or morning talk, that she got into bed with daddy. A zealous teacher reported this to the welfare authorities who then started to conduct interviews. The next thing the parents knew was that their names were all over town as people who were involved in improper practices with their children. All of this occurred without so much as a by-your-leave, an interview with the parents or any sort of discussion with them at all.

Again, I wrote to the minister to outline the concerns of the parents. In fact, there were 3 items of correspondence and there was not so much as a beg-your-pardon from the minister. There was no acknowledgement of the problem and no apology for what had occurred. I think that, at the end of the day, even the departmental officers were prepared to acknowledge that it was a very unfortunate set of circumstances and that an overzealous action on the part of the teacher had set the ball rolling.

Perhaps, in a big community like that of Alice Springs or Darwin, such an event might occur with very few people having any knowledge of it whatsoever, and the damage to the family name would be minimal. But in this case, the

family was an old family. When I say an 'old family', I mean a long-time Territorian family with many branches. As many as 6 or 8 different family groups were attached to the family and they felt, and I believe rightly so, that they had been wronged in a very serious way by the administration of the act. There was nothing that they could do except whistle Dixie.

Mr Speaker, I say to the minister that I think there is a need for confidentiality to protect the names of people. However, there is a very serious flaw in the act in that people who are wronged have no recourse. We knew that this could possibly happen when we passed the act. People who are wronged have almost no recourse. If we want to maintain the support of the community in relation to legislation like this, it has to have the balance that one honourable member was talking about a moment ago. In my view, that balance does not exist, and it is only a matter of time before the community pulls away from supporting the legislation. If that happens, it will become very difficult for the minister and his officers to implement it in a meaningful way.

Mr Speaker, while I do not have an amendment in train to introduce today or for the minister to consider, I say to him that those are 2 cases that were very damaging, not just to families but to the department, to government and to the administration of the act by virtue of the flaws in it and the poor administration of it. If the minister is amenable to the proposition and would consider holding the legislation over, I think it would be a very good exercise to put into the legislation a set of provisions that give people recourse when they believe that they, their families or whatever have been unreasonably maligned or defamed as a result of actions taken in administering this legislation.

I will take only a minute more. I am sorry to hold the minister up. I remember very clearly the great debate that took place at the time when this legislation was brought into the House and, if the minister reads the second-reading speech, he will get a picture of that. I do not think that he was here at that time. The great debate was about overkill and the possibility of giving too much power to too few people in relation to a very sensitive area of administration, and that is the area of sexual offences and the improper behaviour and practice of adults in relation to children.

There are some examples of how that has happened and I think that we need now to build into the act some provisions to give protection to those families who are good families but whose circumstances have been judged unfairly in relation to their children, and whose names and reputations have been badly damaged as a result of that. If the minister is amenable to such a proposition, I will be quite happy to discuss with him how I think the wording could be organised to give protection to parents. But I do say that in my view it is no longer acceptable to leave that vacuum, for want of a better word, in the legislation because, in its present form, it will lose the support of the community.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support of the general thrust and intent of this legislation. I note the comments of the member for Barkly and I would like to comment on them first because I think the honourable member has touched on some genuine concerns that exist in the community. I would be surprised if there is any member of this House who has not been confronted on an electorate basis, at one stage or another, with issues associated with the child welfare and/or domestic violence laws. It is an enormously difficult, sensitive and emotional area of work.

With respect to the first example that the honourable member raised, I do not know these cases at all, and I do not want to know the cases. If I wanted to chase them up I could drag them out I guess, but the individual cases are not relevant. It was the example that was important in the point that the honourable member was making. There are checks and balances in the system and, if a child is taken away, they enable double checking of the circumstances. There is concern about junior officers making these sorts of decisions and the potential exists for misinterpretation or inaccurate decisions. The decision as to when a child is to be regarded as being in danger that justifies removal is certainly contrary to the policy that a child not be taken away from his or her family or parents, unless there is a good reason to believe that that child would be placed in a dangerous situation were that action not taken. As it is, the general objective of departmental policy is to seek to re-establish the proper family bonding relationships in the event of breakdowns, through counselling and other mechanisms which operate after child welfare actions are taken. But there are things which can go wrong.

I will certainly give the honourable member an undertaking that, as I am still working through the processes of briefing, in discussions and follow-ups, there will be an examination of situations in which our people have acted capriciously or improperly. Certainly, it is not my style, to use a phrase, to allow people be left to hang out in the breeze and suffer the consequences. I do believe we owe those people the right of an explanation, and an apology at the very least. Even if the damage has been done in that sense, if we find that we are wrong, action should be taken and there should be an apology. It is a sensitive and emotional issue and I can understand that, in communities such as those in the honourable member's electorate, it would take about 2 seconds for information about such circumstances to go from one end of the town to the other and many consequences would flow from that.

Similar situations arise in the second case. There will be occasions when child protection officers will take a child into custody and then go and talk to the parents. The act actually envisages that happening. What concerns me is that that information should have been out and around town. It might be of interest to honourable members to note that section 97 of the Community Welfare Act does provide for those sort of secrecy provisions to be imposed on persons, including departmental officers, except specifically in the course of their duty, to prevent them from disclosing any information or documentation, or publishing any information or documentation they receive. I would certainly look to see whether that provides an existing vehicle for recourse in situations where somebody has been spreading stories around town about a particular person.

Mr Tuxworth: It does not affect officers in other departments.

Mr HATTON: It does. It refers to people, even non-public servants, who may be exposed to the information. The imposition is on them. I refer the honourable member to section 97 of the Community Welfare Act, which I happened to read again while he was speaking. The section provides that, 'a person shall not directly or indirectly, except in the performance of his or her duties or in the exercise of his or her powers or the performance of his or her functions under the act', etc. It says that 'a person', except when carrying out responsibilities under this act, should not reveal any information.

I accept that there is a risk of overkill in these debates. I would be quite happy to discuss with the honourable member any ideas he may have on how

to ensure that we have the appropriate balance between ensuring the protection of the child from abuse by parents, which is of paramount and fundamental importance, and protecting innocent parents from public embarrassment. The paramount objective is to protect the child whilst also protecting parents against overzealous welfare workers, and I am happy to discuss that with the honourable member.

I do not believe that this particular amendment interferes with that process. It does not add a new element that would prevent those further considerations. It is a separate issue to what we are trying to do here. We are trying to reinforce measures which would prevent people spreading stories around town about cases that may have come up. In fact, this legislation would help parents in the situation the honourable member referred to in his second example.

Should the honourable member come up with any ideas, and I am certainly prepared to turn my mind to the matter to ensure that we have the right balance, I would be happy to look at what we can do. I do not believe that it is necessary to delay this legislation. I would be quite happy, if we can find something that is worthwhile, to bring forward further legislative amendments. If it was important to so and if honourable members felt that it was appropriate, it could be done by way of urgency in the House.

Similar comments apply to remarks made by the member for MacDonnell, in the sense that he did not want to attack welfare officers. I do not know how they will react when they read in Hansard his comment that some welfare workers believe that the family is a pathological institution. I do not think they would be pleased about that sort of description of themselves, even by inference. I make that comment for the benefit of the honourable member. He may want to be a little careful.

I am certainly a strong supporter of the family unit, and our department and our government are strong supporters of the family unit. The practices and procedures adopted by child welfare officers and the Child Protection Unit aim to support and reinforce that family unit whilst recognising that, on some occasions, irrevocable breakdowns occur which make it appropriate to adopt alternative courses of action in the interests of a child. The checks and balances that are built into the legislation and into the procedures should be examined carefully, particularly the requirement to justify the matter of taking a child into custody before a magistrate within a short period of time. There are follow-up confirmations and administrative procedures within the department whereby senior officers double check and review files of junior officers to try to build checks and balances to remove the risk of individualism and overzealousness of an officer in a particular individual situation, and even the overzealousness of a department in putting references through to the magistracy for final determination in a number of these matters. Of course, the act is aimed at the immediacy of a crisis situation and then, as quickly as possible, bringing the matter before the judiciary for determination. It is not a matter of the department running down the road in its own merry way.

I do not support the concerns expressed by the member for MacDonnell with respect to the Community Welfare Act in that new clause. It is not a change of policy. We may seek to differ on this but I do not think, in the interests of the child, that parents should have the right to go running off to the newspapers to beat up stories about how they are being improperly accused of doing things to their children or whatever. Parents should have a right to recourse through the judiciary, but I do not think it does the child any good

to have the family name exposed through the newspapers with the consequent publicity. Rather than opening the way for media campaigns, we need to ensure that the judicial and other appeal mechanisms are effective. We do need to think of the child ...

Mr Collins: You would hardly do it if you were guilty of it.

Mr HATTON: The member for Sadadeen says 'You would hardly do it if you were guilty of it'. I can tell the member for Sadadeen that quite a number of people go to extraordinary lengths to proclaim their innocence when they are as guilty as sin. They will use their children's names and emotions in the battle to publicly proclaim their innocence. That is a tragic fact of life, but it is a fact of life. We need to ensure that we protect the children, and that is what the objective is.

I do not support the member for MacDonnell in his view that we should be somehow opening up the opportunity for ...

Mr Bell: It is not what I said, Steve. It is not what I said.

Mr HATTON: It is the implication of what the honourable member said. I do not believe that it is what we should do. We should be seeking to prevent the circulation of the names of children and, where appropriate, the names of parents, through the public arena, by gossip or otherwise. We should deal with such matters as privately as possible in the interests of all parties concerned in this very emotive area. Having said that, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

Mr HATTON (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.

#### MOTION

#### Noting Ministerial Statement on Prostitution

Continued from 31 August 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I very much appreciate the difficult situation that the Attorney-General is in with respect to this particular issue. In fact, as I was sitting here earlier, I was reading 2 articles, 1 of which appeared in The Age on 20 October. Entitled 'The Flesh Trade' and written by Tony Noble, it concerned the legalisation of brothels in Victoria. A similar article in the Melbourne Herald a couple of weeks ago covered the same subject. One of my concerns about the minister's statement is that it draws entirely on the Territory's experience and the actions of police and escort agencies here, and does not reflect on interstate experience. I intend to make comment about that later.

You will recall, Mr Speaker, that when the Attorney-General introduced this statement during the August sittings, I spoke briefly to place on record my views about the subject generally. My feeling at that stage was, as it remains, that prostitution is a sad industry. In his statement, the Attorney-General referred to 4 issues that were being addressed. I propose to address exactly those 4 issues. He talked firstly about the appropriate regulation of what he termed the escort service industry. He referred

secondly to the question of living off immoral earnings, thirdly, to the question of procuring and, fourthly, to the question of public health issues and brothels.

I turn now to the first of those issues. In his statement, the minister did not distinguish between escort services and brothels. A brothel, by definition, is a place that is publicly advertised. An escort service, of course, basically involves no more than a telephone contact in the first instance. The minister pointed out that we really do not have any alternative to some form of registration. It is not clear whether that would apply to the women themselves, the organisations, the offices which are used or the people who organise the services. The minister referred also to the problems which have occurred in Queensland which have been highlighted so dramatically by the Fitzgerald Commission. Police in that state were able to exercise power arbitrarily without being subject to any checks and balances. I accept that we have no alternative but to provide a more adequate legislative and administrative framework than that which exists at present.

I endorse the Attorney-General's comments about the probity of our police officers and the generally responsible attitude of the people who are involved in this business in the Northern Territory. I note in passing the comments made by the organisation which rejoices in the acronym PANTHER. For honourable members who may not be aware of it, that stands for the Prostitutes Association of the Northern Territory for Health, Education and Referral. I will be referring occasionally to some of the issues canvassed and attitudes expressed by that group.

While I am speaking generally about this business, I want to make reference to a great difficulty that I have. The Attorney-General mentioned in his comments that he did not condone prostitution. He made that abundantly clear. I think it is important to place on record that it is a very sad industry. In my view, legislatures have a responsibility to find alternatives for the people who get caught up in it. If I have any criticism of what the Attorney-General had to say, it would be that he said nothing about the people, usually men, who use these services. The concentration in this debate has been almost exclusively on the women involved. That strikes me as unfair and unbalanced. I believe that governments have a responsibility not only to examine the supply side of the prostitution contract but also the demand side, and to seek to diminish the demand.

One matter that needs to be mentioned in that regard is the advertisements for escort agencies which appear in the NT News. Comment has been made to the effect that advertisements for staff associated with those advertisements are illegal. They are in fact procuring for the purposes of prostitution and I believe that they constitute an offence under section 136 of the Criminal Code. I have said on previous occasions in this Assembly that I find the appearance of those advertisements in the mainstream newspapers of the Northern Territory abhorrent. To put it simply, I object to having escort agency advertisements appear beside my kids' sporting results in the local paper. In the context of this particular debate, I believe that we would be doing a considerable service in diminishing the demand side of the prostitution contract by either moral persuasion of the editors involved or, if that does not work, appropriate legislation which would remove such advertising from our mainstream papers at least. I say that in the context of my belief that, if we are to be responsible in addressing the problems associated with prostitution, we have to look at both the supply side and the demand side of the equation.

In concluding my comments on the first aspect that the minister sought to address, the question of the regulation of the escort service industry, I indicate my support in principle for some process of regulation which takes the matter out of the police station for exactly the same reasons to which the honourable Attorney-General referred.

The Attorney-General's second point referred to the question of living off immoral earnings. To some extent there is a problem similar to that of regulating who works in escort agencies. There is a similar problem because the police retain a discretion to prosecute or not to prosecute for living off immoral earnings under section 57 of the Summary Offences Act. Obviously, the current situation is that, if you are answering the telephone in an escort agency, you are presumably paid to do so and can therefore be deemed to be living off immoral earnings in breach of section 57 of the Summary Offences Act. I would like to see some closer examination of the classes of people who may be threatened or have in the past been threatened with prosecution under this section. I think that requires more debate.

I endorse the approach that the Attorney-General has taken to this very difficult issue in canvassing the issues by way of ministerial statement. I wonder whether some form of public inquiry may not be an appropriate way to proceed. The Attorney-General has assured us that he will take on board the comments made by honourable members and I have every confidence that he will do so. The matter is then to be a subject of legislation, after consideration by Cabinet, but that may not necessarily be the appropriate way to proceed. As I have said, I have obtained some views from various people and am indicating some of my own views. However, I would not imagine that my soundings have been in any way exhaustive, let alone that my understanding of the issues is omniscient. Before the Assembly has the opportunity to debate the matter issue further, I would like to see some form of open public debate, and advertisements calling for views from people who may have strong feelings or information which honourable members should be aware of.

The third issue raised by the minister concerned procuring, and I indicate my support for the Attorney-General's stated opposition to any amendments to section 136 of the Criminal Code. I believe that the experience in this area is a particularly unfortunate one regardless of so-called enlightened views which would suggest that women who become involved in prostitution are sophisticated young things for whom prostitution is merely a dilettantish pursuit. Despite the impression fostered by the sort of advertisements that these organisations put about, that is far from the truth. On the basis of information available, the indication is that degradation and poor self-esteem together with a background of physical and psychological and, in many cases, sexual abuse as children is part of the background. The slick, sophisticated and elegant image that the industry attempts to accrue to itself is a long way from reality.

I suggest that one of the seedier aspects of this is the business of procuring. I do not think that any member of this Assembly who want to see one of their children ending up as what is occasionally referred to in public debate as a sex industry worker. There are no occupations in which awards are handed down by the Industrial Relations Commission that I would be unhappy to see my kids working in. I would be quite happy to see my kids working at any sort of job that allowed them to employ their talents and, importantly, to retain their self-respect. It is difficult to see how we can regard the so-called sex industry as one in which that is possible. I do not think that any member of this Assembly would wish their children to become involved in the sex industry, and I think that most people in the industry itself would feel the same.



I think that that point needs to be made.

I turn to the fourth point to which the honourable minister referred: the public health issue and the matter of brothels. Obviously, the question of sexually transmitted diseases has been exacerbated with the epidemic of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome or AIDS as it is known. Quite clearly, we have a responsibility as a legislature in that regard and, possibly, that is one of the most difficult issues involved. To return to the comments I made before, we were saying that the concentration on the health measures that are taken by the women involved in the prostitution contract is perhaps one-sided and perhaps we should be considering ways in which the men who are part of the demand side of this contract can be encouraged. I point to the Victorian experience. It is unfortunate that, at this stage, we do not have figures available in respect of the Northern Territory. An article by Dr Rob Moodie, a senior medical officer in the AIDS STD Unit of the Victorian Department of Health, makes reference to the dramatic drop in contact tracing involving infected prostitutes. Dr Moodie was a physician with the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress for several years. Thus, we have a Territory connection with this particular issue.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that the member for MacDonnell be granted an extension of time to complete his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their indulgence and I hope that this contribution is of value. I will endeavour to be as brief as a thorough analysis of the issues will allow.

The question of contact tracing involving prostitutes infected with sexually transmitted diseases has dropped to 1% of the workload of the Department of Health in Victoria. This compares with a figure of 30% several years ago. It think that is instructive. The question of compulsory health testing is a vexed one. I note that the fairly extensive argued submission from the prostitutes association rejects compulsory health testing. In his statement, the Attorney-General indicated the government's intention to introduce compulsory health checks. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to receive input from staff of the Department of Health and Community Services in that regard.

Mr Manzie: They do not agree with compulsory testing.

Mr BELL: I place on record the interjection from the Attorney-General which indicates that there is some dispute amongst health professionals about the virtues or otherwise of compulsory health testing.

Mr Speaker, there is often a conjunction between illegal drug use and prostitution. Some unfortunate people, usually women, are forced into prostitution to feed a drug habit. As honourable members will recall from the debate about the needle exchange program, a dreadful cocktail of the 2 issues may be involved. The exact implications of that in terms of this Assembly's decisions about public health measures would most appropriately depend, I believe, on a closer examination of overseas and interstate precedents. In respect of that public health issue and concerns about compulsory health testing, I believe that we should be taking interstate precedents into consideration.

The question of brothels, as opposed to escort agencies, was not really addressed by the honourable Attorney-General in his comments. I indicated that, to my knowledge, the existence of brothels in the Northern Territory, as opposed to the existence of escort agencies, has not been a widely publicised question. I am not aware of public debate in respect of brothels as opposed to public debate in respect of escort agencies. I mentioned in passing that the experience with the legalisation of brothels in Victoria has been that dozens of brothels are operating whilst the escort agency business cannot be regulated. Whilst advertising can be regulated, the secret nature of the contract, which involves a simple telephone connection, makes the regulation of escort agencies a much more difficult process. I simply indicate the Victorian experience in that regard.

The Attorney-General has raised various other issues. I note his intention that the employment of a person as a prostitute, when that person is known to be under the age of 18 years, will be a crime punishable with imprisonment. Of course, I support that proposal. The proposal that laws governing prostitution should be applicable to both females and males is also supported.

The Attorney-General referred also to the question of discrimination. I am not absolutely clear about the form of discrimination that he was referring to. He said that 'the question of discrimination will be addressed but efforts will be made to prevent men from working in escort services where women are also working'. The rationale for that sort of separation is obvious but I am not absolutely sure what the minister meant by the question of discrimination in that particular context.

He also stated that soliciting for the purpose of prostitution should remain an offence. I support him in that regard but I indicate that the prostitutes association has a concern that known prostitutes, or prostitutes known to the police, are frequently wrongly accused of soliciting. I appreciate that, from the viewpoint of police, it might be very difficult to judge whether prostitutes are or are not soliciting. At this stage, I would have to return an open finding in that regard. As I have said, however, I do not believe that soliciting should be made legal. I indicate my support also for the Attorney-General's position that procuring for the purpose of prostitution should remain an offence. I have made my position quite clear in that regard.

Mr Speaker, with those comments, I hope that I have provided an outline of the opposition's position with respect to the difficulties involved. I point out, in conclusion, that we support the provision of an appropriate legislative and administrative framework to prevent the police from being accused of being involved, or tempted to become involved with prostitution, as has occurred in Queensland. I look forward to the process of public debate that will set in place an appropriate legislative and administrative mechanism.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, when the Fitzgerald Report was presented, some time passed before anybody in the Northern Territory made comment on its findings. I think 2 or 3 weeks elapsed before I said anything about it and, much to my surprise, people such as myself were accused of political opportunism because we jumped in and expressed views about some of the report's recommendations. Of course, the reality is that any government in Australia which attempts to ignore the issues raised in the Fitzgerald Report is really very foolhardy. It is only a matter of time before we all have to take account of issues raised in the Fitzgerald Report and take steps to address them in our own community.

The minister's statement on prostitution really begs a community response on some of the important issues. I am not going to get involved in debate about the morality of prostitution. It has been around for thousands of years and great theologians before my time have failed to come to grips with the question, so I will not turn my mind to it at all. The fact remains, however, that prostitution relates to one of the greatest health risks facing mankind, and I refer in particular to the spread of AIDS. If anybody wanted any evidence to support what I have just said, honourable members may recall a recent TV story about a certain lady in Sydney who enjoyed the benefits of being a prostitute. She was quite openly strutting the streets of Sydney as an AIDS carrier and a working prostitute, giving AIDS to anybody who cared to call in. In my view, such a person should really be taken on a homicide charge, rather than simply removed from circulation to prevent the further spread of the disease.

Nevertheless, I do not see the profession of prostitution in terms of morality or immorality. It is all about the administration of public health. In the Northern Territory, we should take the steps which need to be taken to ensure that the spread of AIDS is minimised. It is no secret that my views on the administration of the AIDS program varies markedly from that of other members in the House. I just think that, in this particular area of administering the control of the spread of AIDS, as a community we are not being serious about it. If there were an outbreak of yellow fever or polio, the public health officials of the Northern Territory and the politicians would move hell and high water to minimise the outbreak and to ensure that the disease was contained within as limited an area as was possible. But in the case of AIDS, which has the potential to wipe out mankind in its present known method of operation, we are taking a very generous approach to those who have it and those that spread it. Regrettably, prostitution is one of the areas in which AIDS can be spread. For that reason, I believe that we should set aside the moral debate about prostitution and focus on the public health issues. Consequently, my remarks are based on a public health administration viewpoint rather than moral issues.

In my view, there is a need for registration of anybody operating in the industry of prostitution or escort services, not necessarily with the police but certainly with health authorities, for those persons to be tested very regularly for the presence of AIDS, and for steps to be taken to isolate those people who wish to continue in the profession and possibly give AIDS to any unsuspecting customer that they might have on their books.

Mr Smith: How do you isolate them?

Mr Manzie: You only let them have customers who have AIDS.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I will pick up the interjection of the Leader of the Opposition and say that, quite frankly, that is one of the very serious problems that will have to be dealt with at some time in the future. Certainly, in the case of the lady in New South Wales who refused to desist from the practice of being involved in prostitution as an AIDS carrier, the authorities eventually took her out of circulation and placed her in an environment where it was not possible for her to pass on AIDS. That is pretty draconian stuff but, in terms of answering the Leader of the Opposition's interjection, it is the sort of decision that will be confronting legislators and administrators ...

Mr Smith: Are you going to lock up every prostitute who will not have an AIDS test?

Mr TUXWORTH: No, and that is an unreasonable proposition and an extreme extension of the argument. We need to have a way of dealing with the problem, and I am advocating that, by treating prostitution as a public health matter rather than a moral issue, we will certainly make much more progress in dealing with problems such as the spread of AIDS.

Mr Speaker, I listen with great interest to talk about controlling the industry, because it has been fairly active in the Northern Territory for a long time and I have never known it to have been controlled in any reasonable way at all. In terms of control or administration, keeping a check on what was occurring finished up as a laissez-faire arrangement between the police authorities and the people in the industry. I think we all agree that, while those laissez-faire arrangements have probably been working in a proper way, it is not reasonable or fair to require the police to continue operating under those arrangements. For that reason, I believe that there is a need for us to place some legislative or administrative controls on the industry itself.

When talking about the industry of prostitution, there are many people on the fringe who, in my view, should be considered as possible health risks as much as the prostitutes themselves. While it would be very convenient to pretend that those living off immoral earnings - the procurers and other people involved in the industry - are not really part of it, they have as much responsibility in terms of public health administration as the prostitutes themselves. I say to the minister that, when he comes to deal with this, I think there is a good argument, in public health terms, for identifying just about everybody in the environment of a prostitute and looking at how they can be tested and checked for AIDS in particular as well as other diseases. Whilst, again, that might sound pretty draconian or unreasonable, but we are dealing with a virus, in the form of AIDS, which is quite capable of wiping out mankind.

The discussion and the debate about brothels I have found of great interest. I think the whole concept of a brothel in this day and age is irrelevant. There are just so many premises that can be used for the purpose of prostitution that the old concept of the brothel is really no longer important in terms of the way society operates, and I think we do get hung up on it a bit. But, again, if there are to be establishments such as brothels, I do not think that they should be administered in terms of the morality of the profession of prostitution. They should be administered simply in terms of the public health aspects of the industry.

During the course of his statement, the honourable minister raised a whole range of issues and one that I would like to deal with in particular is the role of people such as pimps and procurers who, in order to advance their own wealth and well-being, lure women into the profession of prostitution and, in many cases, make them victims of the drug industry as well. I would like to say that, in my view, these people are really the lowest form of animal life. I do not have any sympathy for them at all. If the minister wants to bring in some pretty tough legislation to deal with people who go out of their way to reduce the lives of people in the community to a very low level, then I wish him luck and I will be a strong supporter of any steps that he wants to take.

I find it interesting that, over the years, we have established some very strong laws and remedies for people who get into the drug game and make people victims of the drug industry, and people who ruin the lives of many Australian citizens simply in order to make a buck out of flogging drugs. But it is regarded as the norm for pimps and procurers to do the same thing in the prostitution industry. Maybe it is because prostitution has been around for a

couple of thousand years and we have not actually decided to get tough with it but certainly, in my view, it is a matter that is as serious as drug pushing for the simple reason that the whole object of the procurer and the pimp's existence is to reduce the lives of women to something that is very undesirable and, as the member for MacDonnell said, something that we would never like to see our own daughters involved in.

Mr Speaker, I do not wish to go on much longer. I have made my point about the treatment of the prostitution industry being decided on the basis of public health considerations rather than being dealt with as a moral issue. There will be people in the community who will decry us as legislators if we do not uphold moral standards by maintaining the criminal status of prostitution, because they will say that we are letting social standards slip. That is one of the prices we will have to pay if we are to be serious about prostitution and if we are to treat it on a public health basis as the major vehicle for advancing the spread of AIDS.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I intend to be brief in this debate but I feel it incumbent upon myself to rise and add some thoughts of my own in relation to this issue. This would be a fairly simple debate if we were able to divide the issue of prostitution into merely 2 areas, one being morality and the other public health. The member for Barkly would prefer to regard it as a public health issue only and others would prefer it to be a matter of morality. I think the issue is far more clouded than that. There seem to be some cross issues that relate both to morality and public health.

Prostitution is an unfortunate industry. It is an industry that has been in existence since time immemorial and it is an industry that will be with us regardless of what we do as legislators. We may well decide in this Assembly to outlaw prostitution in all its forms in the Northern Territory. That will in no way reduce the demand and, probably, it will in no way reduce the supply. The supply and demand will still be there but, unfortunately, we will not be able to control it or understand it.

I said that it is an unfortunate industry and, as the father of 2 girls, I would hope they would never find themselves working in it. If either of my daughters chose to take up prostitution as a means of making an income, as an adult person fully aware of the implications of that, and making a free choice to become involved in that industry, I would not be very happy. Probably I would not understand but, objectively, I would have to accept it as a decision of an adult person. Unfortunately, too many of the young ladies involved in prostitution - and I am not saying that this is necessarily the case in Darwin although it certainly is in other places - are there as a result of dependency on drugs of addiction. I do not think we can look at the industry of prostitution without looking at why some of the young ladies are in that industry, and that is because they have an abhorrent habit to support and need the quick cash for a quick fix.

I do believe that it is only if we control and regulate the industry that we will be able to ensure that those working in it are doing so of their own free will and volition and on the basis of a decision taken not through some need to supply themselves with drugs but purely for commercial gain. Also, from the public health aspect, as the member for Barkly pointed out, there is a danger of the spread of AIDS through casual sex, prostitution certainly being one of the great promoters of casual sex. Mere regulation and a requirement that people working in the industry undertake regular health or medical checks is not enough. Certainly, there has to be an education program associated with the industry and the workers in the industry to ensure that

they fully understand the risks and dangers of their occupation and that they are able to convey those messages to their customers to ensure that their customers fully understand the risks and health dangers to themselves.

As I said, it is not an easy question. It is not a question that this Assembly will be able to decide on easily. We have the issue of brothels. In some respects, the absence of brothels probably has a diminishing effect on the industry in that it is not as openly promoted as it would be if there were neon lights flashing, inviting people to partake of whatever joys brothels may offer. On the other hand, the form of the industry in the Northern Territory at the moment, with so-called escort agencies providing home or hotel visitations, is probably not ideal either, in that there are many would-be customers who do not wish to invite ladies into their homes or their hotel rooms. If we are to accept that the industry exists, we may as well accept that the customer may have some rights too.

I would suggest that we should control and regulate the industry. I would suggest that we introduce some form of medical and health testing which would also include testing for drugs of addiction so that we could be as comfortable as possible that those participating in the industry are not there to feed some drug habit but of their own free choice and volition. I do not think that any amount of argument on moral issues will be of much benefit. Whatever we decide in terms of morality, the industry will remain. I hope that we will see legislation before the House which addresses the public health issues as well as the problem of people being allowed to enter into the industry when they have not really made a decision to do so of their own free choice. I hope that it will also address the problems of brothels, and their location and operation. Legislation should address the wide-ranging concerns which people have about the industry, but it must recognise that the industry exists and can be most effectively regulated by reasonable and sensible controls. Rather than heavy-handed powers, the legislation should contain provisions which encourage, rather than enforce and punish.

With those few words, Mr Speaker, I thank the minister for his statement.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this has been a very sensible debate and I congratulate members who have participated in it. It is very easy to sensationalise or trivialise matters like this but I have certainly listened with considerable interest to the valuable contributions made by members to what in fact is a very valuable, sensible and sensitive ministerial statement.

Most of the issues have been widely canvassed. My basic reason for rising to speak is to reinforce one of the key findings of the Fitzgerald Report, which is that governments leave themselves open to trouble in the longer term if they allow police forces to determine standards in what is obviously an area which needs to be governed by legislation. That was a key finding of the Fitzgerald Report. Fitzgerald said that many of the problems in Queensland started from the fact that the police were expected to operate in a vacuum in terms of controlling the prostitution industry in Queensland. That led to all sorts of allegations, many of them true, about police corruption. We have not reached that stage in the Northern Territory. We have had an effective system, which involved informal police controls on the industry. However, neither the Police Commissioner nor the Police Association believe that that is appropriate any more. Both have called for the government to introduce legislation. I think it is appropriate that we accept that call and enact appropriate legislation as quickly as possible.

I have no problem in saying that the suggestions made by the Attorney-General indicate, on the whole, a sensible way to go. I think it is appropriate that the approach being used informally by the police at present provide the basis for legislation. That informal approach provides a perfectly adequate basis for future legislation.

One of the trickiest questions relates to compulsory AIDS testing. I must admit that, like my colleague the member for MacDonnell, I would be interested to hear the views of the officials of the Department of Health and Community Services which, I understand, are not fully supportive of compulsory testing. Certainly the attitude of PANTHER, for what it is worth - and I guess it is worth a good deal as the body representing people who work in the industry - is opposed to compulsory AIDS testing. That opposition is based on the belief that, if AIDS tests are made a compulsory requirement for registration to work as a prostitute, many of the women who want to work in the area will not register and therefore will operate outside the law. Of course, that would pose all sorts of problems.

It is very easy to say that we will only register prostitutes to operate through registered escort agencies, but it would be a very difficult job indeed to crack down on all those prostitutes who chose to operate outside that framework, out of pubs or clubs, in the casino car park, or wherever. The situation is very difficult. I know that the Attorney-General agrees with that assessment and, certainly before we come down one way or the other on that particular issue, much more discussion has to take place. It is not, as the member for Barkly would have us believe, a simple public health issue. Working out where the balance lies is quite difficult. We have to find the most effective way of providing the best possible protection for the community in general and for the consumers of the product.

I might say as an aside that, if we were really interested in stamping out the industry, the most effective way to do so would be to impose penalties on the consumer rather than on the supplier of the service. Perhaps castration would be a bit drastic but certainly it would be possible to develop a system whereby potential brothel users would be left in no doubt that they would use brothel services at quite considerable personal cost in one way or the other. Of course, Mr Speaker, nobody would suggest such an approach in this day and age. The industry is a fact of life. There is reasonable evidence to suggest that a well-regulated system does act as a safety valve to release some sexual pressures which might otherwise be expressed in less desirable circumstances. The whole area is quite complex.

I was interested that the member for Karama, in his intelligent contribution to the debate, gave the green light - or, perhaps more accurately, the neon light - to the legalisation of brothels. I thought that was a fairly brave thing for him to do. I suppose he would say: 'Yes, we can have brothels as long as they are not in my electorate'. Of course, Mr Speaker, that is one of the key arguments. If we are to have brothels, where do we put them?

The advantage of properly regulated brothels is that they offer a greater degree of protection to the workers in the industry. There is no doubt that, under the present escort agency system, in which workers go to the homes or hotel rooms of customers, they are sometimes at risk. During the past few years, there have been some quite horrific stories about how prostitutes or sex industry workers have been physically abused in the course of visits to clients. Obviously, from the industry's point of view, the concept of brothels is quite attractive. However, the issue needs more discussion.

Mr Speaker, I did not intend this to be a long contribution, and I will conclude by again congratulating the minister for putting forward a discussion paper which, in a rational and balanced manner, raises the major issues which confront us. I would urge the government to proceed with legislation to ensure, at least as the bottom line, that individual prostitutes are registered as well as escort agencies. Mr Speaker, I congratulate all honourable members who have contributed to this debate.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, the contributions of honourable members have been most welcome. Prostitution is a difficult area to address because of the numerous problems which have been quite amply described by various members.

The question of health checks certainly has the potential to cause disquiet. The bottom line has to be an objective of providing the best possible protection to the community. Obviously, it is up to the government and all members of the House, as well as the community at large, to come to terms with how that protection might best be provided, and then to implement whatever measures may be necessary. We have heard a variety of views on testing. The member for Barkly was quite firm in his support for compulsory testing of all people in the industry and his argument that that should include not just the providers but also the consumers of services. On the other hand, PANTHER has argued that testing should be voluntary, on the basis that compulsory testing would lead some people to operate outside the system.

It is of some interest that health professionals in the Department of Health and Community Services have advised that they do not believe that compulsory testing is the way to achieve the objective of providing the best possible protection. As I have indicated, submissions from PANTHER to myself and, I presume, to other honourable members, have also adopted that stance. I am yet to be convinced that it is the way to go. As a minister in the government, I face the same dilemma as the community at large in relation to this particular problem. I think there is only one sure thing about AIDS: if you catch it, you die from it. That is the bottom line.

We have a system which requires compulsory reporting regarding certain sexually transmitted diseases. If people are found to have these diseases, there is a program to chase up contacts. There are certain legislative requirements regarding transmissible diseases. With regard to an incurable disease, we need to look very carefully at testing procedures.

I welcome the comments regarding brothels. Should we look at defining brothels? Should we look at ...

Mr Collins: Aren't they illegal?

Mr MANZIE: Brothels are illegal under the Suppression of Brothels Act, but ...

Mr Collins: Prostitution is not.

Mr MANZIE: Prostitution is not illegal. Soliciting and living off the earnings of prostitution are illegal. At the moment, people in the Territory are trying to walk down the middle of that fine line by not breaking the law or, if they are breaking it, by trying to do so in the nicest possible way. Personally, I do not like the idea of having a brothel in my street and I do not think any Territorian would. In Victoria, the whole matter was based on town planning criteria. If an area was zoned for a brothel, one could operate



there. The complaints regarding noise, vehicles, groups of people, illegal parking and raucous parties in the middle of the night have shown that the people who live in the area of these zoned brothels have found them to be most unsatisfactory. It is the old not-in-my-backyard syndrome. People say that they really do not mind brothels, but they do not want them in their own street.

I still have a fairly difficult task. We have heard the Leader of the Opposition say that we should enact legislation and that really we have to do something in light of the position that the police are presently in. The member for MacDonnell is saying, and quite rightly so, that we should have more public debate. Maybe there are areas in which we could look at enacting legislation now and other matters which could involve greater community discussion. As the Leader of the Opposition said, if we do not act in relation to certain matters, the Fitzgerald Inquiry has very clearly indicated the sort of problems that have occurred in this country. We would be irresponsible if we did not take legislative steps.

I thank honourable members for their contributions. I welcome any further suggestions or comments from any member on this subject. It is a matter that should be approached in a bipartisan way. It is something that we will all have to live with, either directly or indirectly, and it is something that all Territorians want to see resolved satisfactorily. The main task is to try to protect the community from some of the more unsavoury practices that result from the industry, to give the police some legislative backing for the actions they are taking and to provide protection for the health of people. I thank honourable members for their contributions.

Motion agreed to.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

I refer honourable members to matters raised in the adjournment debate last night by the Leader of the Opposition in respect of the work of the Sexual Assault Referral Service in my department and, in particular, in respect of the Royal Darwin Hospital. Subsequently and privately, the Leader of the Opposition gave me sufficient information to enable me to carry out an investigation of the matter to ascertain exactly what the circumstances were and, in that process, to confirm the procedures currently adopted at the moment in the case of sexual assault referral. To assist in maintaining anonymity in relation to this matter, I will speak in terms of day 1, day 2 and so on.

I made the point last night that a referral service is set up on the basis of ensuring that there is counselling available. I was somewhat surprised last night at the thought of some person not having access to counselling and having been for several days without access to counselling or any support system whatsoever. As a result of the investigations that have been carried out during the course of today, I must advise the House that that was not the case. In doing so, I would like to explain to the Leader of the Opposition what occurred and perhaps suggest how, in the future, we might avoid some of the issues that were raised last night. I am trying hard not to turn this into a point-scoring exercise.

The woman in question was taken to the Royal Darwin Hospital at about 3 am on what I will refer to as day 1, the day of the rape. She was examined by a female doctor and counselled by the same doctor, who is also skilled in sexual assault counselling and attends sexual assault cases for this reason. It was explained to the woman then that further counselling was available. She did not make an appointment or request further counselling. She then left the hospital. Nevertheless, on day 3, a hospital social worker who is skilled in sexual assault counselling telephoned the woman's home to offer follow-up counselling. She could not be contacted and it was later discovered that she had stayed the weekend with a friend. Another telephone call was made on day 4 when she was at home. She made an appointment to see the counsellor at 5 pm the following day, at her home. Prior to keeping the appointment with the counsellor, the woman went shopping at Rapid Creek Shopping Centre and, at that time, called in to see the Leader of the Opposition at his electorate office. This is advice that this woman gave today to our people at the hospital ...

Mr Smith: Yes.

Mr HATTON: ... when she attended one of the counselling sessions that she is undertaking. At that time, she discussed her rape with the honourable member but either did not tell him that she had made an appointment with the sexual assault counsellor for that afternoon ...

Mr Smith: She did not.

Mr HATTON: The honourable member is saying that she did not advise him.

Mr Smith: No, she did not.

Mr HATTON: The following day, she was visited by the counsellor.

Mr Smith: No. The same day.

Mr HATTON: Another appointment was made for another session at 5 pm the next day. She is undertaking a series of daily counselling sessions. She made further appointments for counselling at her home on days 7, 8 and 9. She failed to show up for 2 of those appointments.

Mr Smith: Who was this with? The hospital social worker?

Mr HATTON: With our counsellors. We have social workers who undertake sexual assault counselling. This explains the procedures, and the follow-up efforts that our social workers and counsellors made.

During this time, the Royal Darwin Hospital social workers approached the Darwin Magistrates Court to see if bail conditions for a man charged with offences in relation to sexual assault could be changed, because of the woman's concern that this man was living close to her home. The outcome of this approach is still awaited, but I mention it to indicate the extent to which the Royal Darwin Hospital social workers are prepared to go to provide assistance and support to this woman, and indeed to any other victims of sexual assault. Any further appointments for counselling will be up to the woman. The service is available for as long as she needs it.

On the basis of that outline, I must say that the comments by the Leader of the Opposition about the adequacy of the rape crisis counselling that is available currently are inaccurate. My speech goes rather further than I wish

to go at the moment. The comments made in the House misrepresented the situation and, unfortunately, caused some serious concern to and anger among the social workers at the Royal Darwin Hospital. One of the most fortunate outcomes is that the counsellors at the Royal Darwin Hospital are very upset and angry. They feel that a slur has been cast upon their professionalism and dedication to the job. They do a difficult and demanding job, and they deserve some recognition and praise. Unfortunately, they see that, in this situation, they have received a slap in the face.

As I said in the House last night, we have planned for some time to increase sexual assault counselling services and are awaiting the appointment of staff. In the meantime, the facts of this matter show that an adequate service is available, particularly considering that counselling and support services of the Ruby-Gaea Centre Against Rape, which is funded also by the Department of Health and Community Services, are also available to sexual assault victims. In fact, this particular rape victim used that centre in addition to the counselling referred to by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Smith: She was not told about Ruby-Gaea by your people.

Mr HATTON: That is not true.

I make this comment to all honourable members. I know we are all confronted with situations like this at times. We hear stories and we believe we have all the facts in front of us. It is a temptation to stand up in this Assembly, make statements about the situation as you know it, draw conclusions from that situation and perhaps have a shot at the government or the opposition or whatever in the course of doing that. If honourable members are confronted with situations such as this, at least in relation to my portfolio areas, I ask them to contact my office. I will investigate any allegations of this nature. If members are not happy with my findings, I am not saying that they do not have the right or the obligation to go public and make an issue of the matter, if the facts stand up and what has occurred is wrong. In this case, contact with my office and a check with the hospital would have confirmed the fact that this woman was offered and was receiving counselling even at the time she went to see the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Smith: That is not true.

Mr HATTON: She had been undergoing counselling on the night. Contact had subsequently been made with her and arrangements made for counselling prior to her seeing the Leader of the Opposition. She has undertaken a series of sessions of counselling, as have all victims of rape. In fact, the social workers have gone further than counselling. Because of the woman's concern about the proximity of the alleged attacker, who was on bail, they actually approached the court to have it change the bail conditions to ease her mind and assist her in securing her protection.

It is true that people make mistakes and systems break down. The system that is in place in respect of the Sexual Assault Referral Service is working. I do not believe that it broke down in this case. In fact, I would say that it did not, and I commend the people involved for the time and effort they have put into assisting the woman concerned. We are working to improve this service and I know that the social workers at the hospital are working under some pressure in the absence of counsellors. But they are doing the job, and they do not appreciate allegations that they are not doing the job. That is the unfortunate result in this case. They were doing the job. The woman was receiving counselling and support.

On the night of the rape, the offers and support services were in place. There was later follow-up after the woman refused them and, when she was able to be contacted, counselling sessions were put in place immediately. There has been continuing follow-up from that time. All that occurred separately and, indeed, in advance of any contact with the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I need to make a few comments on that. Like the honourable minister, I feel that the subject is too important to be turned into a political issue. May I start by saying that I meant no criticism of the counsellors at the Royal Darwin Hospital. If they feel upset and believe that I have slighted them, I apologise to them, and that is a rare thing for a politician to say. Certainly, it was not my intention.

Like the honourable minister, I recognise that these people have an enormous job to do normally, without having the additional burden of carrying out sexual assault counselling, which is very demanding, stressful and time-consuming work. My key point is that they should not have to do it. The real point of this exercise is that, if there were a proper system in place with 2 sexual assault referral counsellors, they would not be doing it. There has not been that sort of service for 18 months now.

I apologise to the social workers at the hospital if they think that I have slighted them. I certainly have not. I was on their side. I was trying to bring attention to a situation that should not exist. I was trying to bring attention to a situation where 2 vital positions have not been filled for quite some time, which has placed an extra and very significant burden on people who are already overworked - the social workers at the hospital.

May I say also, Mr Speaker, that I believe that the system did fall down and it fell down on that night. In a situation where a woman has been raped, and she is at the hospital at 3 am in the morning, for goodness sake, and she is not Australian into the bargain, you cannot expect her to make rational decisions. Frankly, I do not think it is good enough. I think that it is a failure of the system that - and I put it forward constructively - when a woman is asked a simple question such as whether she wants to make another appointment, the matter is left at that. I suggest that the action needs to be rather more positive than that and, secondly, I think it is necessary to make sure that the relevant people know where the woman is going.

As I understand it, she turned up at the hospital with a friend. It should not have been too difficult to obtain the friend's address because that was where she spent the next couple of nights. Those are minor criticisms which arise out of the situation at the hospital where everybody who is dealing with these matters is stretched beyond the limit because of the government's failure to put in place the proper procedures. The system is not good enough because 2 essential people are not in place in the system and, until those 2 essential people are in place in the system, it will not work. Gaps will occur and people will slip through the net, just as this particular women slipped through the net for those crucial 4 or 5 days.

I am happy to accept that the social workers probably went beyond what they had to do in terms of providing ongoing services, and I congratulate them on that. It was an enormous effort, considering the workload that they have, but again the point is that they should not have to do it, and they would not have had to do it if, over the last 18 months, the government had taken seriously the question of replacing a burnt-out worker, Kathy Munroe - and let us give her credit, while we are at it. Kathy Munroe laboured away there on

her own for 18 months, I think it was, without getting any money for out-of-hours calls. She did it for an enormous length of time, and then just could not cope any more and had to give it up. That was 18 months ago and we still do not have a replacement for her. Now the government has accepted that, in fact, the job that she was doing out there on her own, without any overtime remuneration, requires 2 people to do it, and I agree. It does require 2 people, with administrative backup as well as provision for out-of-hours money when people are called out, as happens quite a lot.

That is the key point, Mr Speaker, and that is why I raised it yesterday, in order to get some publicity for the fact that the system is falling down and that not much seems to be happening in terms of getting the 2 new officers in the Sexual Assault Referral Centre. If what I achieved is that the honourable minister has given some priority ...

Mr Hatton: I had done it before you opened your mouth.

Mr SMITH: ... to getting those positions filled, then the result will be that the benefit will have been achieved.

The bottom line is that neither he nor I, nor any other man who is a member of this Assembly, can possibly know what it is like to be raped, can possibly understand what it does to you to feel helpless while a stronger human being forces himself on you. We cannot possibly know what that does to a person's sense of self worth and self value. But I have been told, by people who have experienced it, that it puts you in a very, very deep hole indeed, and you need counselling from the start, counselling that will get you over that very difficult period. In this particular case, that did not happen.

Let us use this particular case as an example of what went wrong. I accept the honourable minister's assurance that the system in place at present is the best that we can have until we recruit the 2 new positions, but let us put some priority into getting those 2 positions filled, so that women who go through this most horrifying experience get the best possible support and attention in trying to put their lives back together again.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will take only a few minutes of the House's time this evening to draw to the attention of honourable members a problem that I discovered recently and which, I presume, may also be affecting a few other members in their electorate offices. It relates to problems with bulk postage dispatched from electorate offices and the charges being made by Australia Post for bulk postage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you are probably aware that, years ago, a substantially reduced rate applied if bulk postal items were taken to the post office, provided that there were more than a certain number of letters in any one bundle. Something very interesting has happened in the last year and that is that, whilst there is still a system covering bulk postage, the post office refuses now to accept bulk postage unless it amounts to 50 pieces of mail or more - per postcode. That might sound rather obscure to some people but I will use my electorate as an example. The electorate of Ludmilla encompasses 6 different postcodes, namely: the Darwin postal district, the Darwin GPO boxes, the Nightcliff postal district, the Winnellie postal district, the Winnellie PO boxes, and the Berrimah postal district. When I wish to circulate letters within my electorate, I have to have 50 letters for each or any one of those postal districts before I can obtain the reduced bulk postage rate. That annoys me greatly.

Mr Collins: It is not worrying me.

Mr FIRMIN: Some people tell me that you can avoid that situation by refusing to show any postcode at all. I believe that makes a criminal of you by making you commit an illegal act.

I think it is time that Australia Post ...

A member interjecting.

Mr FIRMIN: That is why I do not do it. I have just said that I do not. I have been told by some members that I could attempt to get away with doing that, but I refuse to become a criminal and resort to that sort of subterfuge to obtain the reduction in price. However, I do believe that Australia Post ought to review its attitude to bulk postage in respect of the postal districts.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am so pleased that the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries is here because I would like to draw his attention to a serious lack of concern for a great number of people in the community who, I believe, could contribute considerably to the agricultural development of the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, the minister and his senior officers are completely neglecting this group of people.

It needs only a little lateral thinking, or consideration by people with a feel for the agricultural, horticultural and pastoral development of the Northern Territory to comprehend and understand what I am talking about. I seriously believe that certain personnel in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries do not have the necessary feel for the development of the Northern Territory. In fact, I do not believe that they have a feel for agricultural development at all. I am seriously concerned about whether some of them know which end of a cow moos.

I want to discuss the situation of people who live on what could be called hobby farms. These people live on small blocks in the rural areas, and could be termed part-time farmers. My extensive reading of agricultural publications from the states indicates that such people are gaining considerable support and attention from governments and public servants in other parts of Australia. I am very concerned that, in this particular instance, like the cow's tail, the Northern Territory seems to be behind. It takes only a little lateral thinking to see how much these people contribute to the development of the Northern Territory in their own small way. I am not talking only about people who live in my electorate. I am talking about the small block owners and part-time farmers who live around Katherine, in the honourable minister's own electorate, and the people who live in the rural area around Alice Springs. They are all included in my consideration. They have a great deal to contribute to primary industry in the Northern Territory, and I believe that they do not receive the help and encouragement they should receive from government. I believe that, if they received that help and encouragement, they would contribute even more.

Before anything happens, the relevant people have to be hit between the eyes with the realisation that part-time farmers exist in considerable numbers in the Northern Territory. Open debate on the subject then has to occur, and that can lead on to programs which will encourage these people in the future. I would say that most people who live in the rural areas, on small blocks as part-time farmers, do so because they want that particular way of life. In

addition, it may be that they want an alternative income, and another consideration may be their origins. People who come originally from the country tend to have a yearning for the rural way of life. I do not think that enough research has been done on the contribution these people make to the development of the Northern Territory.

These hobby farmers, block owners, and rural dwellers already support industry in the Northern Territory. I am talking about their support to the people who sell fencing equipment, pesticides, seed, fertilisers and all the other products and services which support rural industries. Companies like Dalgety, Loveridge Mining and Pastoral Agencies, Titan and Elders are all supported extensively by these small-time farmers.

I believe that, historically, people who live on small blocks in rural areas have been looked down on by certain people in agricultural departments throughout Australia. I would include in this certain people in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries in the Northern Territory. They are looked down on because they are not full-time farmers. They are not full-time horticulturists or pastoralists. With the application of modern thinking and by keeping up to date with what is happening in other parts of Australia, I believe those attitudes should and will change. Not only do the people who live on these blocks and small farms support the businesses that supply them with the services that they need, but they also engage in small-time agricultural and rural occupations. I am talking about the people who engage in slashing, spraying, hay baling and the supply of farm labouring services. When you think about it, Mr Deputy Speaker, the subject becomes bigger and bigger.

The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries employs extension officers. They do a reasonably good job. I have known them over the years. They are nice chaps and nice women. They are competent in their field and they do the work that they should do. They are easy to get along with and are very sympathetic to people who ask them questions and seek their advice. I have great praise for their efforts over the years. I have had a great deal to do with people like that, who work in the field. However, I believe that the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries does not do enough to publicise the fact that these people actually exist.

I know that the department is frequently contacted by people who have queries about various matters. They receive consideration, encouragement and, when necessary, sympathy in dealing with the problems they face. However, I believe that the honourable minister has to pay more attention to the provision of added facilities by way of an increased budgetary allowance for more positions, so that officers can go out into the community rather than just waiting for work to come to them. If officers are able to go out and look for work, they will encourage the agricultural development of the Northern Territory. I believe that the minister would do well to consider providing an extension officer position to service the small-time farmers, hobby farmers and rural dwellers. Such an extension officer would need to have qualifications in many fields. The extension officer who offers advice to the pastoral industry is qualified along certain lines relating to cattle husbandry, horse husbandry, fencing, dipping, spraying, slaughtering and so forth. The officers I am thinking of would have to have a wider knowledge and a wider interest in many things. Perhaps the depth of knowledge needed by extension officers specialising in particular fields would not be necessary for what I am suggesting, but they would certainly need a wider breadth of knowledge.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to digress briefly without entirely leaving the subject, I believe that the government should show a similar interest in small producers in the buffalo industry. At one stage, the government provided support by way of loans, which became grants after a number of years if certain covenants were adhered to. I agree with that approach and I support the government's initiative. It is a good idea but the government is not going far enough. People living on blocks keep considerable numbers of stock overall and, despite efforts over a number of years, I do not think that anybody in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries has the answer as to how many animals of various species are held by people in rural areas around Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs. People hold these stock for different reasons.

The government could assist the buffalo industry by cooperating with small-time producers who could obtain young female buffalo from large government herds and, under some sort of lease arrangement, keep them under supervision. Under certain conditions agreed to by the small-time farmer and the officers of the Department of Primary Production and Fisheries, the females could be kept and bred under supervision. I am not talking about extensive herds of buffalo. I am talking about small herds of between 6 and 12 head. The minister and his senior officers may think that this is small beer and not worth thinking about. However, when you multiply those numbers by the many hundreds of people who could be interested in such a scheme, it becomes clear that there is great potential for encouragement to the buffalo industry.

Like many other people in the community, including members of the opposition, I believe that, in the wish to fulfil the requirements of BTEC, we are shooting out our buffalo herds without doing enough to encourage the breeding of buffalo, and this brings me back to the problems with the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries.

I believe that there are 2 reasons for the lack of innovative ideas in the department. The first relates to insecurity of positions and the disregard paid to learned people. I have known many of the department's officers for many years. They are not able to put forward innovative ideas because they are worried that any change to the status quo will make their positions insecure. It is not a happy department. I can give the minister only generalities on this matter. At present, probably he talks only to senior officers but, if he goes down the ranks a little, he will find that it is not a happy department. There is a great deal of frustration, particularly among people engaged in scientific work. Their expectations of advancement are not very high and the conditions of work are not very good. I have been into many of the department's offices and, if these people were into swinging cats, they would not be able to do so in their offices.

To expect people who have studied for many years to gain scientific expertise to work in those conditions is, I believe, nothing short of scandalous. Their poky little offices are really just enlarged broom cupboards. We expect scientists and skilled officers in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries to work in these tiny cubbyholes. They do not complain because it serves no purpose to complain. I will not mention their names to the honourable minister, but I suggest to him that he take a trip out to Berrimah to see for himself the conditions under which these people work. It is clear that people working in such conditions cannot give of their best.

To recapitulate briefly, I believe that the honourable minister and his senior officers need to do some lateral thinking in order to recognise the



enormous potential for agricultural development in the Northern Territory through the efforts of small land-holders and farmers in the rural areas. They should provide more active support for those people and, in doing so, look at the working conditions of their own departmental officers.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, recently I was invited by a group of Year 11 English students at Driver High School in Palmerston to talk to them about Aboriginal issues. I spent some 45 minutes with them and I hope that they learnt something, because I certainly did, and I would like to share that with you.

The students had many misinformed ideas about Aborigines. These are some of the misconceptions and questions that they raised: that Aborigines are lazy, that Aborigines want to live on the dole and that Aborigines want to waste government money. They wanted to know what contribution Aborigines make to our economy, why Aborigines should have land rights, and why Aborigines should receive special benefits that are not available to other Australians. I asked myself why they were asking me these questions. I thought that probably the only people who had talked to them about Aboriginal people and Aboriginal issues were their parents and other people in the community. In particular, they would have gained some of their ideas from the media.

If Territorians are truly to become a community and to develop together, these concepts need to be talked about and explained. Understanding of one another is essential if we are to produce the sort of society most of us want. I explained that what they saw as laziness was often the result of a situation where people feel manipulated and powerless. That leads to feelings of depression and boredom. There is also a lack of employment in communities and there is a difference in lifestyles. Our traditional lifestyle involves movement, hunting and ceremony. When a history of inadequate education is added, it is little wonder that some Aborigines end up on the dole.

However, the students were surprised when I explained the CDEP program introduced by the federal Labor government, through which people are actually working for their unemployment benefit so that the community gains something from the dole as well as the person receiving it. This does not occur anywhere other than in Aboriginal communities. The Australian taxpayers obtain great value as much of the work done is the sort of work which would elsewhere be carried out by local governments. A federal Liberal government would seek to cut this program and I hope that members opposite will advise their federal colleagues of their stupidity on this matter.

However, there is a positive side of which these students were largely unaware. I refer to the involvement of Aboriginal people in the work force, especially in tourism, arts and craft, and the mining and pastoral industries. Take away Uluru, Kakadu, Nitmiluk, the Tiwi islands and Aboriginal culture, and you would not have much of a tourist industry in the Territory. I said that the Aboriginal people in the Territory are making a contribution to the economy of this country. The growing involvement of Aboriginal people in mining is clear, although there is a need for more jobs and training to be made available.

Aboriginal land rights are the basis of this change, and Aboriginal people needed those rights. Land rights has helped people return to their own country and to overcome social problems. It gives them independence and allows them to practise their ceremonies and keep their culture.

I was happy to be the guest of the school to talk to students about Aboriginal issues. There were many aspects that we covered. Unfortunately, the time available to me on that occasion was insufficient. I told the students that at any time they would like me to, I would be glad to go there and talk to them again. They were surprised to learn that Aboriginal people are involved in tourism and in the arts and crafts industry, which is a multi-million dollar business in Australia. All the art and craft work is done in the Territory. These are some of the things that need to be told to the students so that they will have a better understanding. Maybe, when they get older, they will go out into the communities and help the communities to grow.

They did not say many negative things. I was really amazed that they said many positive things. I was truly surprised to hear those things from Year 11 students. They asked me questions about Aboriginal issues. We talked about the benefits of Abstudy which encourages Aboriginal kids to stay at school. They all understand that, if we are to break the poverty cycle for Aboriginal people, education is needed. Aboriginal people do not have a tradition or habit of attending school. Abstudy encourages and helps them.

In summary, Mr Deputy Speaker, this occasion brought home to me the fact that we have a long way to go to remove misunderstanding between races in the Northern Territory. We need to get people to interact with each other more often. By talking to each other openly, the Year 11 students at Driver High School and I had an opportunity to make a move towards building a more tolerant society that we can be proud of and that will be an example to the rest of Australia.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on 2 issues relating to education. As we have heard here today, there is significant concern amongst members on this side of the House and in the community about education. I would like to bring 2 specific issues to the attention of honourable members. The first relates to recruitment of specialists, the need to retain the trained staff that we have in the Territory and the need to increase the qualifications of the people who are here. I would like to read a letter that was sent recently to the Minister for Education. I will read it rather than attempt to summarise it because the lady concerned has done a very good job. It is from a Mrs Cherie Jones:

Dear Mr Harris,

I am writing with regard to my intention of upgrading my teaching qualifications interstate next year and to point out some apparent anomalies within the department re funding assistance. I have been employed by the Education Department for the past 3 years as a teacher of the blind and visually impaired at Tiwi Primary School. My initial qualifications were obtained at the Melbourne Kindergarten Teachers College so, although I am working in this position, I do not have the required specialist training.

I intend moving to Melbourne next year for 12 months to gain this qualification at the Victoria State College. This course is not available in the Territory and cannot be done externally. Victoria has a reputation as the best place to obtain this qualification. I have applied for leave without pay for 1990 and study leave concurrently - study leave, for financial reasons, being my preferred option. My application for study leave was unsuccessful although I was granted leave without pay.

I made inquiries as to other forms of financial assistance and this is where the ridiculous situation becomes evident. I am astounded that, although the department is desperate for trained staff, particularly in the area of visual impairment, and is prepared to continuously advertise throughout Australia, I am unable to get any financial assistance to do this graduate Diploma in Special Education majoring in visual impairment.

If I were to do a course externally, part-time, with a live-in component during the holidays, on completion of my course and providing that I passed, I would be reimbursed my air fares to attend that live-in component and also college fees would be reimbursed. However, there is no assistance for full-time study, and the course that I have applied for cannot be done any other way.

The second anomaly is that the department permanently advertises interstate for teachers with graduate Diplomas in Special Education. At present, only 3 of the 6 teachers working in visual impairment have special education training. The department has difficulty attracting qualified staff to the Territory and, when a successful applicant is employed, their relocation expenses and air fares are paid. The majority of the staff employed this way often remain in the Territory only 1 or 2 years and then terminate their employment. So it is incongruous that here I am, a permanent resident, committed to the Territory, keen to develop professionally by upgrading my teaching qualifications so that my training can be put to practical use working directly with the blind and visually-impaired children in the Territory, yet I am unable to obtain any sort of financial assistance. In view of the circumstances, I can see how people in this situation would become disillusioned and be reluctant to return.

If I resigned from the department now and reapplied through the interstate recruitment on completion of my course, I would probably get the job and therefore be eligible for relocation and fares. This I find very hard to understand. As it stands, I will be going to Victoria with no guaranteed income. I will have to look for part-time employment to do the course full time. This is a very big step as my 2 dependent children, aged 13 and 15, will be coming with me. I would like this opportunity to place this information.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have heard the minister speak of the need to recruit qualified people overseas because we cannot recruit them in Australia and yet we are losing people of this sort. Extensive numbers of teachers have resigned this year or are looking for transfers to other areas. This is the sort of episode which explains why that is happening. We are prepared to recruit them overseas. We are prepared to offer incentives to those people, but we are not prepared to support the people who have already made a commitment to education in the Territory.

The second issue that I would like to raise is another that demonstrates the incompetency, disorganisation and lack of planning shown by the Minister for Education and his department. It has come to my attention that, earlier this week, Kath Phelan from the Department of Education went to the NT Secondary Correspondence School to inform the workers, the teachers and members of the department presently employed there as Northern Territory Teaching Service personnel, that the school that they are working at will not be a school next year. It will become part of the Open College and they will become TAFE personnel. That occurred 3 weeks before the end of the school

year. Again, it shows the lack of planning by and the incompetence of this department and its minister. If it has been known for some time that this proposal was to be implemented, why wait until so late in the year to announce it? If it had not been being planned for some time, what sort of incompetent organisation springs that sort of information on its members, the teachers within this school, at this time of the year, or even makes a decision, at this time of the year that the system will change totally in 3 weeks time?

There are some quite significant implications for the staff and for students of the Open College. Again, there has been no prior consultation with the people whom this will affect. For any staff member who does not want to become a member of TAFE, it is now too late to apply for transfer to any other teaching position.

Under the present regulations, TAFE teachers do not have to be qualified teachers under the definition that school teachers or NT Teaching Service teachers have to meet. The implications of this raise questions about what is to happen in the future, and whether things will change. Will teachers who want to come in have to upgrade, or will teachers with lower standards move in? My understanding is that, at the moment, TAFE positions start at the Band 2 salary level. Does this mean that all teachers who will be staying on will have to reapply for their positions for next year, even though there is no time to do that? Does it mean that there will be major staff disruptions and dislocations at the beginning of the coming school year, when things commence?

Again, I feel that we have to bring to the attention of the public the total disorganisation and ineptitude that is being shown by the Minister for Education and his senior departmental officers in running this area.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak tonight about Nyirripi community in my electorate. It is a community which has shown significant growth in recent years. Health records now show a stable population of some 250, and a temporary group whose number hovers at around 30 so that, at any one time, there are almost 300 people in this community. It is a community whose remoteness has played a major role in its receipt of services and, dare I say, the concern of government. It was not so very long ago that the people did not have a community vehicle or any mail delivery. They had very poor communication facilities - and some of those are still very unsatisfactory - and, of course, extremely poor roads.

I am pleased to say that, after many years of battle, this community has begun to forge ahead with great vigour. To give an example of the determination of this community, let me look initially at the way the people worked to get an airstrip. After months of haggling and arguing with various government departments, principally the old DCD, the people of the community decided they were not going to get much assistance by way of professional advice on their airstrip, so they set about developing their own area. They completed it as far as was possible before it required additional professional work to enable it to receive certification as an airstrip. This took some time, but was finally achieved. The results mean that the community has better access to emergency services such as the Flying Doctor, and to a regular weekly mail drop.

I say all this by way of preamble to demonstrate the commitment of the people of this community and their desire to forge ahead as a community. This is a way to demonstrate the stark difference between the attitudes of this community and the attitudes of some of the departments of the Northern

Territory government and I must refer particularly to the Department of Education.

One week before the end of last term, the Nyirripi school had a regular enrolment of 50 students, a sizeable proportion of the children in the community. At this time, the school was visited by some senior officials from the Southern Region of the Department of Education. Members of the school council pointed out to the department that they expected that they would need relief teachers early in this term. This was because the 2 teachers at Nyirripi school were coming down with quite severe illnesses and they anticipated that it was likely that they would need replacements. They also wrote to the department advising of this situation. What response did they get? Absolutely nothing, and the community did not hear from the department again. This meant that, until the sixth week of the present term, the school was without teachers. The school was closed.

What happens to the education of the 50 children involved, Mr Speaker? It stops. What happens to the activities at the school and of the school council within the community? They stop. What happens, more importantly, to the attitude of the community and the children towards the school and to education? It becomes tarnished forever.

As I said, this is a community which is very proud of its school, its children and the teachers who teach them. Despite the fact that the school is inadequately resourced, a matter which I will return to soon, the parents and teachers worked hard to ensure maximum attendance. Their success is demonstrated by the growth in student numbers since early in the year and its stability at around 50 students. Yet they received this sort of treatment. Would any department allow this to happen anywhere else in the Territory? I doubt it.

I raised the subject of resources at the school with the minister, both through letters and in the Assembly during the October sittings. His response was very discouraging. The school population suffers from a chronic lack of space. Some members of this House that have visited that community and know just how small that house is. The students have to be taught in cramped conditions in the worst possible circumstances. There is no safe and secure area to stack school materials. The community believed that it was to receive a new building to provide the additional space required but this was not forthcoming despite extensive negotiations with the Department of Education and the federal Department of Education, Employment and Training. The wishes of the community in relation to the size of accommodation and special needs have been ignored and the funding supplied is woefully inadequate. Finally, after haggling with the department on this matter, the community informed the Department of Education verbally that it would accept the relocation of a temporary building from the Mallapunyah Springs area.

The department did nothing. There was no response. When the community's fears began to increase that this relocation would not occur, it rang the department and was informed that no action had been taken because it had not provided written confirmation. The school building is still not in place and the whole process seems to be being delayed by bureaucratic nitpicking which is totally unnecessary. Why did the department not inform the community at once that written confirmation was required? The letter would have been on the desks of departmental officers as soon as the mail plane could deliver it. Overall it is reprehensible behaviour by the minister's department.

The community has also had some concerns regarding its health service, and I am pleased to report that this situation has now been largely solved. The community receives regular overnight visits by nurses from Yuendumu, and the district medical officer visits on a monthly basis. The health service is extremely pleased with the work of the new health worker, Hamilton Morris, and the community clinic has been repaired and is up to par.

First, I congratulate the Minister for Health and Community Services on the fact that he has been out to the community and determined that he would provide some help in relation to that situation. However, I have a couple of suggestions in terms of what needs to be done to set things in place before everything is fully to my liking. I shall be writing to him on those matters. The most serious of these concerns the storage of medical supplies. The clinic has no lockable cabinet and no cool area which will allow for the storage of dangerous and/or perishable drugs. Some community members have expressed concern that, in the event of a real emergency, lifesaving drugs may not be available on the spot to visiting nurses or medical staff. The pharmacist who supplies these drugs says that he cannot supply the community with any substances which can be tampered with, which, of course, means that they must be held in a suitably secure area.

The other matters I wish to cover in regard to Nyirripi relate to power and water supplies. I will deal with power first. Let me say that I am pleased to see progress in the establishment of the power station, even though it is happening definitely 12 months later than the minister promised me and promised the community. I understand that a technical hitch has developed with the earthing of the power poles etc, because of the nature of the soils at Nyirripi, and members who have been there will know that, basically, it is built on a series of sand ridges. I would appreciate any advice the minister can give me on any progress that has been made to solve that problem.

The community is very keen to have Aboriginal people trained to work at this power station. I think that is a very sensible idea. Basically, the community needs to be as self-sufficient as it possibly can be through the work of its own people in the essential services and other areas. The work force that is trained to work at the power station will then consist of people that the community will know will remain in Nyirripi once the power station is in place, rather than presenting the problems which have emerged in other communities where non-Aboriginal people have been brought in and are continually being changed, so that there are continual difficulties in recruiting, with all the attendant problems.

I know that the minister will probably reply that people cannot be employed to do this job unless they are trained, but the fact is that no effort has been made to provide a training source, so they will never be fully qualified to do the job. That brings us to the old chicken-and-egg situation which will continue until such time as we can get the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government to look quite seriously at the matter. I have been in consultation with the federal minister and we are attempting to see whether it might be possible to take up those issues through an expansion of the skill share program operating at Yuendumu to Nyirripi, and to develop training programs at both Nyirripi and Mt Allan. I would appreciate some support from the government on that matter.

The water situation is a little more problematic. I am advised by the community that it has received some excellent cooperation from Power and Water Authority personnel in the search for additional good quality water supplies. I ask the minister to advise me what stage his department has reached in terms

of locating quality water for the community, and when the people of Nyirripi can expect that additional bores will be in place. The minister would be aware that, because of the increase in numbers of people, the reticulation of water and the pressure of water is breaking down somewhat, and the supply to the people is poor. It is very much in the interests of the health of the community that this water supply be set up adequately as soon as possible.

Finally, I would like to address the question of the community store. It is a very positive story. The community store experienced some difficulties in its establishment phase, through the actions of some groups during 1988, which I can only describe as disappointing. I have taken up with the various bodies that were involved the matter of the very poor advice that they provided to the community. In fact, at some stages it was quite incorrect advice and, in some instances, would have justified complaint to the professional body to which the member for Flynn once belonged.

Those problems now seem to be well behind the community and I have been advised that the store has been expanding, with additional space for storage and to stock supplies that the community did not have access to previously. There are plans to add a canteen. The store has almost eradicated its debt problems and has built up its regular turnover to quite a high level. I am pleased to see that the store is staffed almost completely by Aboriginal people and receives regular volunteer assistance from the people of Nyirripi.

I hope that the ministers whose portfolios I have ranged over tonight will be able to take note of some of the issues I have raised. In the area of education, as far as the teachers are concerned, it is of course too late. The people have already gone without a school for more than half a term and some teachers are now being located. I believe that one of the original teachers is recovering and will be going back. Both of the teachers are back on deck, but it is just not good enough to leave a school of 50 children without any staff and without the provision of any education for a period of 6 weeks, when the department had some weeks notice of the situation that would arise.

The problems regarding the size of and the relocation of the school from Mallapunyah have basically been continuing throughout the year. Really, it is just not good enough. These things drift on month by month. We have to remember that, while communities like Nyirripi may be small and remote, the people who live there are as Territorian as anyone else. They deserve a decent standard of service. Whilst ministers like the Minister for Health and Community Services have taken the problems on board and attempted to help, I believe that the Minister for Education should probably put a rocket under the appropriate people to get things moving at Nyirripi.

My final point concerns the development of housing at Nyirripi. This community came to me some years ago with a proposal that it be allowed to make its own bricks. In the mid-1970s, some community members had worked with a brick-making machine which was installed for a period at Yuendumu. Given that they had the necessary expertise and all the materials, with the exception of cement, they proposed to build their own bricks, stockpile them and sell them to the government for so many dollars per thousand. That would have enabled them to pay for the labour component and provide housing much more cheaply than would have been possible through the government's building program. Certainly, the cost of getting bricks to Nyirripi would turn anyone's hair grey.

Nothing has occurred in relation to that proposal. I have spoken to a succession of ministers with responsibilities in that area, all of whom thought that it was an eminently reasonable approach, but nothing has eventuated. As some honourable members may know, an earth-compressing machine is currently located at Amoonguna. The soil available at Nyirripi would probably require the addition of about 5% cement prior to the heavy compaction process. The machine is mobile and very simple to operate. The people at Amoonguna are using it in housing construction and I believe that the government could take a very positive step by assisting other communities to make and stockpile their own bricks. Of course, the government would have to carry out tests to ensure that they were up to a certain quality, and they would have to be stored properly.

Such a project would help to keep funds circulating in the community. It would be positive in terms of enabling people to play a role in building their own houses rather than having them constructed by outside contractors. Everything about the proposal is good. I know that the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government is looking at the Amoonguna project and I hope that he will consider the same possibility for Nyirripi and other remote communities. Certain groups in Tennant Creek are also very keen to discuss this matter with him, and I hope that we will be able to get some action in that regard.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, it is with a great deal of sadness that I move a motion of condolence on the death of Barry John Willing.

Barry Willing passed away on 26 October 1989, aged 50 years. He is survived by his wife Leelah Willing, 2 sons Kelvin and Russell, and daughters through guardianship, Sharon and Kirsty. Barry was born on 30 March 1939. He was one of 4 boys and 2 girls. Unfortunately, his mother passed away at the early age of 36 years, when Barry was only 11 years old. Although his father remarried later, the family was split up for some time between grandparents and other relatives.

Barry's adolescent years were spent mainly at Campsie in New South Wales. In his early formative years, he developed his own character and independence, working for pocket money as a newsboy and doing other odd jobs. Barry was keen at school and was determined to gain a good education. An example of his determination occurred when, after applying for entry to the Sydney Technical College, which he was refused, he was advised that he would be going to Kogarah Technical, which was a great distance from home. Barry took it on himself to enrol personally at Belmore Technical School, which was much closer and which he thought was a better school.

He left school after the third year, due to family financial difficulties, and joined the Sydney Water Board. His early working life saw him upgrade his education qualifications with completion of a drafting certificate and entry qualifications to the Sydney Technical College, where he completed a Diploma in Civil Engineering with merit. He worked for the Liverpool Council for some 6 months before joining Drummoyne Council as chief draftsman. He stayed there for 5 years.

Barry's success at Sydney Technical College earned him a place at the University of Sydney. He joined Willing & Partners 2 years prior to his graduation from the University of New South Wales in 1966, with a degree in Civil Engineering and as an Associate of the Sydney Technical College. At the time of his death, he was the Chairman of Directors of Willing & Partners Consulting Engineers, which operates in Canberra, Darwin, Alice Springs,



Sydney, Port Moresby, Madang and Rabaul. In its 22 years of operation in the Territory, for 20 of which Barry was manager, the company has been responsible for a major amount of engineering design work in the urban areas of Darwin including the suburbs of Alawa, Jingili, Moil, Wagaman, Wanguri, Tiwi, Nakara, Anula, Wulagi and Malak. After the cyclone in 1974, the new areas of Leanyer and Karama were designed by Willing & Partners.

Specific major projects undertaken by Willing & Partners included: civil and structural design for some stages of the Tindal Air Base and the power stations at Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine; structural design on the Christchurch Cathedral, St Paul's Church, the Hooker and MIM Buildings, Construction House and the grandstands at Gardens Oval; civil design work on the Darwin Community College, Iliffe Street Fire Station, Casuarina Shopping Centre and the sporting ovals of Gray, Archer and Driver; design of stage 2 of the new Tiger Brennan arterial road and completion of design on the new Olgas-Yulara Road; and, at the Marrara Sporting Complex, the construction of the new Darwin cricket oval which incorporated a turf pitch, and development of the hockey complex, which required the laying of an astroturf pitch, a first in the Northern Territory.

Barry was active in the community and held several positions on committees. These included the Darwin Primary School, the Institute of Engineers of Australia, the Association of Consulting Engineers Australia (NT) and the Darwin Community College Council. Most people will remember Barry as a member of the Northern Territory Planning Authority. He served on the authority from 1978, the year of self-government, and during the last 3 years he was chairman of the authority. His dedication to his profession was unquestionable and his influence over planning matters over a period of 10 years has ensured the orderly development of Darwin and other townships throughout the Territory.

My first contact with Barry was during 1975, when I arrived in Darwin to work as a consulting engineer with Cameron McNamara and Partners, although I was to find out later that there was a commonality between us as graduates of the University of New South Wales and, of course, as trainees at the Sydney Water Board. Until I arrived in Darwin, however, our paths had never crossed. Barry and I served for many years on the executive of the Association of Consulting Engineers of Australia (NT) and the Institute of Engineers of Australia. Barry was instrumental in the Northern Territory in organising and uniting his fellow engineers after the cyclone, which ensured that the institution continued as a professional and functional organisation. He was eligible for a fellowship as a member of the Institute of Engineers of Australia and was in the process of making an application when he was taken ill. I would suggest that there is scope for the NT Division of the Institute of Engineers to proceed to some further acknowledgement of Barry Willing's contribution to the profession and to the Northern Territory in immediate times.

As a direct competitor of Barry's in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I found his professional competition fierce but very fair, and this attitude gained him enormous respect throughout the profession. On the sporting field, Barry had the same attitude, and many of his opponents found his performance on the field aggressive, but soon realised over a beer after the game that he was just a tough competitor. As a cricketer, he played for most of his career in Darwin with the Casuarina Cricket Club and his athletic prowess as a batsman and as wicket-keeper was well known. Barry supported his club fully as president, long-time committee member, selector and captain. Barry represented Darwin in the Calder Shield competition on several occasions and

acquitted himself creditably. With the advent of Darwin indoor cricket, Barry became a regular competitor in the local competition, displaying the same relish for that game as he did earlier in his career as a grade cricketer.

In February 1978, Barry discovered the game of golf and he became one of its most avid fans. Although I played a number of games of golf with Barry Willing, I was never able to beat him. He was a most skilled golfer. One always enjoyed his company and, of course, the fellowship that followed the game. Barry's approach to the sport of golf could be described only as fanatical. His constant practice and competitiveness quickly saw his handicap reduced to single figures. Barry was a very active member of the Darwin Golf Club and he held the executive positions of vice-captain and captain over several years.

During the period 1980-83, the Darwin Golf Club undertook a major redevelopment of the course and the clubhouse. A redevelopment committee, which included Barry as its consultant expert, was appointed to oversee the development. It is common knowledge within the club that Barry's professional expertise and hard-nosed negotiations with the developer assisted in providing members with a golf course and upgraded clubhouse which can only be described as magnificent. That course in itself is a tribute to Barry Willing.

In 1986, a cancerous melanoma was first diagnosed on Barry's arm. Tests proved that the growth was malignant and he underwent his first operation. Within a very short time, he was back at the golf course making up for lost time. The story of Barry's fight with cancer in the succeeding years is well known. His courage and determination in fighting the disease was personified by one occasion especially. After a major operation to remove growths on his brain, Barry returned to Darwin and, with the aid of a motorised buggy, played 18 holes of golf in the Northern Territory Open Golf Championships in 1988. Although Barry did not complete the 54-hole event, his courage in attempting to compete in the competition symbolised his character. He was a man of great strength and fortitude.

During the last few years of his life, Bernie Franklin, a friend and colleague, showed enormous strength in looking after Barry during his final fight with cancer. She provided Barry with the personal care and encouragement that he needed prior to his hospitalisation and eventual passing.

Barry's funeral epitomised his strength and courage. During the church service, the minister made reference to a phone call he had received from Barry in February 1989, some 9 months prior to his death, asking what he, Barry, needed to do to arrange his own funeral. The funeral was attended by a wide cross-section of the community and, although sad, it ended the long suffering Barry endured and provided relief to those loved ones and the friends who watched him suffer.

Barry Willing has been a great Territorian. He has achieved. He has succeeded. He had incredible courage and he will be missed. My sincere condolences go to his family and I am aware of many Territorians who join with me in paying tribute to him.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I moved the adjournment tonight. In doing so, I sought to deal calmly with a particular matter and to correct some of the misapprehensions spread in the community

during the last 24 hours by the Leader of the Opposition. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition chose this evening to persist in spreading the story that the rape counselling service and Sexual Assault Referral Service in my department and the hospital had somehow broken down.

Mr Speaker, enough is enough. That system did not break down. The Leader of the Opposition has made a fundamental and negligent error in that he did not bother to check his facts. Twice in this Assembly, he has criticised the services of professional people at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I cannot sit in my seat and allow that to go unchallenged.

Last night, the Leader of the Opposition said: 'That woman received no counselling. She did not know who to talk to or to whom to express her concerns'. Patently wrong! In the NT News today, he said: 'She was left in limbo'. He also said: 'The victim was taken to the hospital by police and the alleged offender was located and charged. That happened on a Friday and then nothing. This woman went home on her own with the alleged rapist living in the same street'. That is the story that he is spreading.

The fact is that this woman, a woman of foreign birth who speaks poor English, attended the hospital in the company of a friend. A doctor, who is a specialist in rape referral service and rape counselling, treated her and sought to counsel her. She used all of her well-developed professional skills to seek to counsel this person. However, because of the state of mind that the woman was in at the time, understandably, it was not possible at that stage to communicate properly with her. She could not communicate in English and reverted to her native tongue. Proper communication could not be developed. To the extent that it was professionally possible, attempts were made to counsel that person. She left in the company of a friend, and I am advised that that is the best type of comfort that a person under that type of stress can have.

The next day, follow-up moves were made to contact this lady. Eventually contact was made and arrangements were made for follow-up counselling, before the woman contacted the Leader of the Opposition. He wants to suggest that she came to the hospital on her own, that a doctor conducted a cursory examination and that then she was sent back to her home, which is just up the street from the home of the person who attacked her, and was forgotten. That is the impression that he is trying to spread. It is simply not true. He is absolutely wrong. I need to be very careful of my words because I am becoming quite angry about the way the Leader of the Opposition is carrying on. He is maligning some very good and very professional people and enough is enough.

He said that the woman received no counselling and did not know who to turn to. He said that, on the Tuesday after the attack, she had come to him. Coincidentally, she had come to him to discuss other matters and, in the course of conversation, she raised the subject which has been the subject of debate. Did the Leader of the Opposition do the responsible thing? Did he ring my office? Did he contact the counselling service to find out why she had not received services or to check the facts? No. Did she go to him with a complaint? No. At that stage, she already had an appointment to meet with the counsellors. Today, this woman was herself surprised to find that the matter had been raised last night.

Mr Speaker, I will tell you now that the professional people at the Royal Darwin Hospital and at the Department of Health and Community Services are considerably less than impressed. They do not want to be damned with faint praise either. They did a damn good job in this case, under very difficult

circumstances. There was no fall down in the system. The system worked. Follow-up action was taken. The person was obviously under great stress but the follow-up system was in place and nothing more could reasonable have been done.

We do not need damning with faint praise. We do not need unsubstantiated nonsense from the Leader of the Opposition. If he had a real problem and if he were really concerned for this person, he would have contacted my office or the hospital to check the facts and find out why something had not been done. He has never been in contact with the hospital and he has never been in contact with my office about this issue at all. All he wanted to do was to run this case. He says in the NT News today that he has called for the establishment of a sexual assault referral centre in Darwin as a matter of urgency. He knows - because he referred to it last night and I referred to it last night - that we already have that process in place. The advertisements are about to appear in the newspaper. He knew we were doing that because it was referred to in the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill. He referred to that last night.

He is trying to grab some cheap headlines to indicate that he is the champion of women's health services. He is trying to catch at the coat-tails of actions and initiatives which have already been put in place by the government. He does not care about the woman who is in this situation. If he did, he would have gone and checked with someone. I tried to deal with this matter quickly and calmly but I will not have unsubstantiated, incorrect allegations against the health and medical services of the Northern Territory bandied around in the way the Leader of the Opposition has done in the last 24 hours.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, during question time, the Minister for Lands and Housing referred to comments that I made on radio this morning as 'scurrilous' and 'beneath contempt'. I wish to remind honourable members that 2 of his accusations were completely false and unreasonable. One of them concerned my capacity to raise the issue of finances at Yulara. Contrary to the comments of the minister during question time, I have raised that issue in this House. I remind the honourable minister that, during the committee session of the budget debate, I repeatedly questioned the Minister for Industries and Development with respect to the government's funding arrangements at Yulara, including housing. The minister failed to answer. The Minister for Lands and Housing should be well aware of that. The matters that I raised on the radio this morning in respect of the housing arrangements at Yulara are still shrouded in mystery. The minister went some way towards enlightening us, but far from completely.

#### STATEMENT

##### Work Health Authority

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement on some of the achievements of the Work Health Authority in its 3 short years of operation. Firstly, however, I want to give the lie to some of the misconceptions some people have about the Work Health Authority. In the past, unfortunately, the authority has sometimes been seen as the hero of the worker and the lament of industry. I say 'sometimes' because more and more Territory employers are beginning to see the advantages of adopting the safe working practices promoted by the Work Health Authority. I say 'unfortunately' because I think it is unfair and untrue to label the Work Health Authority as simply another bureaucracy trying to make life difficult for industry. In fact, rather than adding costs to industry, the Work Health Authority is in the business of reducing them. To look at how, we must first consider the authority's charter and scope.

The Work Health Authority was established by the Work Health Act, which commenced on 1 January 1987. The intention was to provide a vehicle for the implementation of the major recommendations of the Doody Report into workers' compensation in the Northern Territory. Until that time, workers in the Northern Territory were covered for compensation by a Commonwealth statute in the case of the public sector and a somewhat dated Territory law applying to private enterprise.

The Northern Territory government was the first in Australia to realise that an integrated approach to work health was the best way to provide comprehensive occupational health and safety protection for its residents. One instrumentality was required to look after occupational health and safety, for overseeing workers' compensation claims and ensuring effective rehabilitation for injured workers. These functions were further enhanced with the incorporation of the former Industrial Safety Division into the occupational health and safety area of the authority during 1987. The Work Health Authority became unique in the Australian public sector administration because it incorporated the prevention of occupational injury and disease, compensation and the rehabilitation of injured workers. I believe that the incorporation of all these functions into one body makes the Work Health Authority one of the best systems for occupational health and safety in Australia. That is something to be proud of and a factor which can be a major incentive for business investment in the Territory.

Workplace health and safety and workers' compensation are facts of life throughout Australia and the whole industrialised world. When we offer industry a reliable and cost-effective system, we become attractive as a place to set up business. I think a measure of the success of our work health system can be gauged by experiences in the Australian states. It is interesting to note that many of those states are now heading towards the same integrated approach to work health which places responsibility for occupational health and safety, compensation and rehabilitation in the hands of a single authority.

The Work Health Act is designed to reduce the human and economic cost of occupational injury and disease to industry and the community. Employers need to realise - if they do not realise already - that prevention of injury and disease in the workplace and early rehabilitation of injured workers is an effective management tool. The Work Health Authority is there to help industry use that tool effectively. The authority's expanded occupational health and safety team not only helps safeguard people from mishap and accidents in workplaces but has also been instrumental in helping employers to develop and train their staff in safe and healthy working practices.

I will give members an example of just what can be achieved through the implementation of work health policies in the workplace. In May this year, the Work Health Authority started a program of training for Sheraton supervisors and middle management at Yulara. That training and advice led to a subsequent improvement in safe working practices at the resort. In the 28 months to May this year, the Yulara resort experienced 3.2 compensation claims per month but, since the Work Health Authority's training program commenced at the Yulara Sheraton, that rate has dropped to just 0.4 claims per month, an 800% improvement.

The Work Health Authority's education and training services to industry are many and varied. It provides operator courses for shot-firers, riggers, scaffolders, dogmen and crane chasers, crane and hoist drivers, boiler attendants and driver's authorisation. It is also involved in chemical safety courses, safety awareness courses, providing lecturers for the Industrial Safety Certificate through TAFE, traineeships, apprentice training and management courses. In future, all vocational courses conducted by TAFE will incorporate health and safety principles.

The Work Health Authority provides coordination for all national initiatives in occupational health and safety in the Territory. It represents the Territory on the National Health and Safety Commission, the Australian Standards Association and on the department's Labour Advisory Committee on Health and Safety Issues. The Occupational Health and Safety Division of the authority has encouraged and assisted employers to accept greater responsibility for occupational health and safety. I am pleased to say that most employers have accepted their responsibilities with open arms.

The Work Health Authority's primary point of contact with industry and workers is its field staff. A field officer's prime responsibility is to provide employers and workers with front-line advice on safe and healthy working practices and obligations under Territory legislation. In the early days, some people used to cynically regard our field staff as industrial police. People thought that they were interfering bureaucrats who were in the business of adding whatever costs and red tape they could add to industry. I am sure that attitude still applies in some small pockets of industry but I am more than happy to say that it has generally turned around. It has turned around because industry in general is realising that the Work Health Authority, rather than stifling industrial growth, is actually promoting it.

People in industry are starting to realise that they have been provided with their own consultant on occupational health and safety matters, someone who is vitally interested in providing advice on reducing their accident experience and, therefore, their overheads on compensation insurance. This advice comes free of charge to industry, and this is particularly important in the Northern Territory where there is a predominance of small businesses which are not in a position to employ their own occupational health and safety specialists.

The Work Health Authority has developed expertise in a number of important safety fields, including control and disposal of hazardous chemicals, radiation hazards, storage of flammable liquids, hazards of fuel gas, explosives, transport of dangerous goods, high hazard equipment such as cranes, lifts and pressure vessels, machine guarding, and construction safety. With this build-up of expertise, the Work Health Authority has become an important service provider to Northern Territory industry and employee groups.

The authority can provide, among other services, ergonomic surveys and handling of materials and processes, investigation of air quality for any contaminants in the workplace and measurement of lighting, heat and noise exposure levels. In the area of explosives, the Work Health Authority controls the Berrimah Explosives Reserve which has numerous advantages for local industries and those wishing to set up here. For example, the authority has recently assisted 2 international companies seeking to establish local manufacturing and external storage of explosive materials in Darwin. The temporary storage of their products on the reserve assisted in the process of market proving. The Work Health Authority has also helped a company seeking to establish a market for concentrated hydrogen peroxide by allowing it to establish a bulk storage facility on the reserve. It provides services to companies importing dangerous substances such as sodium cyanide, which is used in the mining industry, by caretaking suspected damaged containers on the reserve.

In the area of liquid petroleum and natural gas, the Work Health Authority participated on national committees developing safety standards for their use in domestic vehicles and long haul transport. The Work Health Authority has participated in a major way in the establishment of the LNG storage and transport facility at Alice Springs and it assisted with the design of a special transport vehicle for cryogenic LNG from Alice Springs to Yulara Power Station.

The Work Health Authority supervises clean up operations after spills of dangerous substances, such as cyanide, industrial solvents and petroleum. A recent example was in relation to a significant spillage of diesel in a watercourse in Litchfield Park. This involved close consultation with Conservation Commission officers and the fuel supplier, and took the form of removal of contaminated soil and monitoring of vegetation in the area for signs of long-term damage. This is not the only time the authority has been able to help other government departments. In fact, it has assisted: the Department of Industries and Development on the development of chemical industries; the Department of Mines and Energy for transport of chemicals, on-site use of LPG, new LNG production and safety control; the Conservation Commission for ozone pollution measures, disposal of chemical wastes, assessment of chemical handling, and aspects of environmental reports for new developments; the Darwin Port Authority with operator training for handling of chemical cargoes, port area safety and contingency planning; the Police, Fire and Emergency Services for control of chemical spill accidents and chemical safety training; the Department of Transport and Works in joint inspections of

government installations; and the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries for the disposal of organochlorine pesticides.

In the private sector, the authority has been involved with the meat processing industry in terms of providing advice on boiler safety, safe plant operation, general building safety and factory floor design and layout. This involvement has since widened and the authority is called on more and more to provide general assistance and advice to this industry. The authority also has been of assistance at Alice Springs Airport. Initial contact was made with airport staff after some explosives were handed in at the airport check-in. Since then, the authority has provided explosives recognition courses for airline and security personnel and it now provides a range of occupational health and safety services.

As I said before, occupational health and safety is not something for employers to be frightened of. It is an effective management tool. Ranger, Nabalco and Gemco mines all realise the importance of this management tool and have instituted comprehensive occupational health and safety, and rehabilitation policies. The Department of Transport and Works has such a policy using the National Safety Council's 5-star plan. That department is satisfied that the attention paid to worker health and safety has paid dividends. The number of injuries which have caused time to be lost on the job has dropped from 59 in 1987-88 to 35 in 1988-89. The number of days lost through accident and injury has dropped from 684 to 564 over the same period.

We all know education starts long before work and this knowledge has been embraced by the Work Health Authority. A program of visits to schools and other educational institutions has seen 2 important things happen. First, school administrators and teachers are more aware of what they can do to make the school environment safer and healthier for students and staff. Secondly, the advantages of a safe working environment are being instilled in students even before they enter the workplace. I do not think I need to explain the advantages which will flow to future employers and employees as a result of that.

The Work Health Authority is playing its part in national efforts to improve occupational health and safety principles in technical and further education courses. It has been working closely with TAFE in the Territory and I am pleased to see the great spirit of cooperation which exists in this area.

There have been moves to educate the wider community on the benefits of safe working practices. Most members are aware of the Safety Sam campaign which targets specific Work Health areas and promotes them to the community through television and other media. This campaign will be continued and expanded to focus on people in rural and remote communities and on non-English-speaking people. The authority also has a program to produce written information for distribution to employers and employees.

For those who want detailed information on Work Health issues, the Northern Territory Work Health Authority boasts one of Australia's best libraries of occupational health and safety information. It has on-line computer links with national and international databases, including the European Space Agency, US Congressional Library, Worksafe and Medline. We can provide information on everything from the dangers of working with asbestos to procedures for the storage, handling and cleaning up of almost all industrial chemicals.



Significant endeavours have been made in the field of workers' compensation, insurance premiums and claims management. Through the more sensible benefit arrangements now in place and by expanding the number of contributors to the scheme, insurers have been able not only to keep premiums down but to reduce them to the point where they are now lower than they were prior to the Work Health Act coming into effect. Mr Speaker, I table a list of the reductions in workers' compensation premiums over that period.

The document I have just tabled shows the premium rate reductions which have been achieved across a range of occupations since the Work Health Authority was established. I am sure that most members will agree that some of these results are quite outstanding. For the immediate benefit of honourable members, I will cite a few examples. The premium rate for fencing contractors in 1982 was 19.24% of gross wage. Now the rate is just 6.17%, a reduction of 67.93%. For general motor trade employees, the premium rate has dropped from 7.05% before the Work Health Act came into effect to 4.57% now, a reduction of 35.18%. For wharf labour and stevedores, the premium rate has dropped from 16.85% prior to the Work Health Act to 9.45% now, a reduction of 43.92%. These are significant savings and a perfect example of what the Work Health Authority is achieving, not only for the Territory's workers but also for its business community.

The Work Health Authority has consistently promoted the concept of early intervention and rehabilitation of injured workers as being crucial to optimum productivity in business. There has been an increase in awareness levels among employers, insurers and workers throughout the Territory of the advantages of establishing effective rehabilitation programs. Within the public sector, arrangements have been put in place for individual departments and authorities to play a more active part in helping injured staff return to work by appointing rehabilitation coordinators. Their main responsibility is to help injured workers get back into meaningful jobs as soon as possible. Productivity is not the only consideration here. Workers themselves deserve the opportunity to take up meaningful careers again, despite their injuries. The rehabilitation coordinators throughout the public service will give them the opportunity to ensure that their careers are not set back by work-related injury.

I am pleased to say that rehabilitation programs have been taken on not only by the public sector but also by private companies. At Ranger Uranium Mine, the rehabilitation team includes a doctor, nurse, physiotherapist and safety officer. At Gemco, an occupational health nurse looks after rehabilitation. At Nabalco, there is an occupational health nurse and the services of a local physiotherapist are utilised.

Putting people back in jobs after accident or injury is not where the Work Health Authority's role ends. It has undertaken a major review of its reporting system, including the reporting of rehabilitation outcomes. Once completed, the revised system will enable the authority to provide better statistics to industry on accident rate costs and rehabilitation outcomes.

Another important role of the authority is to ensure occupational health and safety research is ongoing. Already, it has initiated research projects into matters such as the incidence of hepatitis B among teachers, in collaboration with the Menzies School of Health Research. It has also initiated educational programs for medical practitioners and other health professionals in areas such as occupational stress and back injuries. A major prevention campaign on back injuries in the Territory will be commenced in the very near future.

All of these projects will lead to better working conditions for Territory workers and better productivity for Territory employers. Occupational health and safety can be used to either the benefit or detriment of us all. If we do not observe safe and healthy work practices, we all stand to lose. Injured and sick workers cost dearly in both human and economic terms, but the promotion and enforcement of safe and healthy working practices is the path to worker satisfaction and industrial productivity. I am pleased that the Work Health Authority has made substantial progress in instilling this concept into both the Territory work force and the business world.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, it seems a long time since the debate in this Assembly prior to the setting up of the Work Health Authority. Debate was vigorous, not only in this Assembly but in the community. There were major philosophical differences in relation to matters such as the abolition of common law. I can remember arguing until late at night about other issues, particularly payments for low-income earners on workers' compensation.

It is fair to say that, in the opinion of most people, the structure has settled down fairly well. Most people have come to grips with it and, certainly, we have no major complaints about the structure. There are still problems in ensuring that the act itself works. I thought that the government was addressing those problems and I am surprised that we are debating a ministerial statement rather than amendments to the legislation. I understood that amendments were promised by the Northern Territory government months ago. I ask the honourable minister to indicate ...

Mr McCarthy: I will tell you now that they will not be introduced without public consultation.

Mr SMITH: Perhaps the honourable minister might be prepared to indicate when the public consultation will start. That would be a useful exercise.

There is still one very basic problem with work health in the Northern Territory: the most dangerous industry, the mining industry, does not come under the Work Health Act. We have pointed out continuously that the present situation, whereby the Mine Safety Control Act is separate from the Work Health Act, is simply not good enough. A Labor government in the Northern Territory will bring the mining industry under the operation of the Work Health Act. It is important to have an integrated approach to work safety in the Northern Territory. That is not possible when the most dangerous industry in the Northern Territory is outside the operation of the Work Health Authority.

Mr Firmin: It is not uncontrolled though.

Mr SMITH: I am not saying that it is uncontrolled. Certainly, in our considered view, it can be better controlled, in the interests of the industry and the employees, within the ambit of the Work Health Authority.

One of the key areas of concern is the matter of rehabilitation. The honourable minister referred to rehabilitation coordinators being employed throughout the public service. I have a follow-up question which I will probably put on notice. I would be interested to know how many coordinators there are and where they are located. From the information that I obtain from the public service, rehabilitation within the Northern Territory Public

Service is still very much underdeveloped. From talking to union representatives and others, there is no feeling within the Northern Territory Public Service that it has across the board a proper policy for the rehabilitation of workers who have been injured at work. I share the sentiments of the honourable minister that this is a very important area. If you are injured at work, every possible step has to be taken to get you back into gainful employment, both for your long-term sanity and for the good of the Northern Territory and Australian economies. Except as a last resort, we do not want people on long-term welfare benefits. Where possible, we want them back in the work force. However, I must say that we have not really gone too far down that track as yet and that the effort within the Northern Territory Public Service to rehabilitate people is less than satisfactory.

It will require a fairly concerted effort to educate public servants. It is not an easy task. It takes skill, education and commitment to be able to say to a person who has been injured: 'You are not suitable for this type of work any longer. However, we will do everything we can to place you in other meaningful work in the Northern Territory Public Service'. Ensuring that that happens effectively is an extra burden on our public service managers. It is, however, a burden and a responsibility which we need to accept. The benefits to the injured person are quite considerable and, if it is done properly, the cost benefits to the government are also quite considerable. The Northern Territory Public Service is the largest employer in the Northern Territory. I would be interested to hear more detail from the minister as to how those matters are being addressed in the public service.

I am informed, for example, that there is no overall rehabilitation program in place at the Royal Darwin Hospital. It is not seen as an integral part of the hospital's treatment of persons injured at work. Maybe there is an argument for saying that it is not part of the hospital's role anyway. Certainly, when the act was originally enacted, most people thought the hospital would have an important rehabilitation role, together with the elements in the private sector. I am aware that the private sector has taken up some of the slack in that area. However, we think there still seems to be a role for the Royal Darwin Hospital in that regard.

There is another area of concern that we have been looking at without having come to any dramatic conclusions as yet. I refer to the power of employees in the workplace to be involved in decisions in relation to safety. The Work Health Act in the Northern Territory does not provide for delegates and workplace committees to deal with health and safety issues. This practice exists in other states, including the arch-conservative state of Queensland which will not be conservative for much longer. It has been demonstrated that one of the most effective ways of obtaining a commitment from workers in relation to work safety and health is to involve them in setting up the conditions and standards on the factory floor, in the office or whatever.

That brings us to a very basic point. The major achievements in work health and safety and in reducing hours lost through injury will come when there is a commitment from employees and employers to improve working conditions and to ensure that they have as safe an environment as possible. It is not something that can be imposed from the top. It has to come from the bottom up. A positive way of encouraging employees to become involved in their own work safety is by looking at the possibility of setting up workplace health and safety committees. Obviously, because of the small size of most businesses in the Northern Territory and the scattered nature of many of them, there are some problems with that. However, it is something that we would like to look at.

The honourable minister congratulated himself and his authority on reductions in premiums under the new system. It is obvious that the premiums have been reduced. On the other hand, the benefits paid to injured people have been reduced also. It is probably a bit early to say whether the right balance has been struck there.

I would like to take the opportunity to point out that, as far as some employers are concerned, there are still problems with workers' compensation that disadvantage them. I was fortunate enough last Friday to sit at a table at the Small Business Awards dinner with Gary Warren from Pine Creek Engineering. As the honourable minister would know, in a period of 1 or 2 years, he has built up Pine Creek Engineering from a concern employing 2 or 3 people to a business with over 80 employees. That is a very impressive effort indeed. He felt that the major disadvantage in operating in the Northern Territory is workers' compensation premiums.

Mr McCarthy: They were much worse before.

Mr SMITH: They were much worse before. I am sure the honourable minister has had this conversation with Gary Warren who made it perfectly clear to me that he has talked to everybody in sight about this problem. Workers' compensation payments comprise 11% of his company's wages bill and he said that the amount is as high as 17% for some companies. The problem is that he is competing in the Northern Territory against companies from Queensland which are paying significantly lower workers' compensation premiums or, because of the different arrangements in Queensland regarding subcontractors, do not have to take workers' compensation requirements into consideration at all when submitting prices for jobs.

I do not believe that there is a simple answer to this. Certainly, there is a need to look at ways in which Territory entrepreneurs like Gary Warren can be protected from interstate predators who come into the Northern Territory and are able, as a result of different work health arrangements interstate, to obtain a financial advantage which can flow through to the quotes that they submit for particular jobs. It would certainly require much more work on our part to be able to come up with a strategy that would overcome that problem. However, we need to be aware of the problem and we need to see how we can address it. An important principle is involved. Every business which is operating in the Northern Territory should be covered by the Work Health Authority and should pay the premiums put in place by the authority. Whether there are problems under section 92 of the Australian Constitution in relation to freedom of trade between the states, I do not know. Certainly, that matter needs to be pursued.

Mr Speaker, we on this side of the House wait with considerable interest to see what changes are being proposed by the Work Health Authority. I think everyone is aware that there are still some problems with the Work Health Act. As I have said, I am a little disappointed that the Work Health Authority, or to be fairer, the government, has not put out a discussion paper on the issues. It is important that everybody has the opportunity to consider how the scheme has been going and to make suggestions for its improvement.

One of our minor points is that we have always been somewhat astonished that the Work Health Authority has never issued a comprehensive document which could provide a guide to employees and employers. In fact, I think the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union has produced the most comprehensive document on work health in the Northern Territory. I have previously congratulated the union for that achievement. Certainly, there is a need for

the Work Health Authority to look at that matter, particularly the possibility of printing the document in languages other than English. Given that we have a rapidly growing Aboriginal employment sector, we might also have to consider printing work health information in selected Aboriginal languages.

Mr Speaker, to conclude, the Labor Party's viewpoint is that the work health system has settled down well. There are problems in the rehabilitation area. I will not go into those problems today, although I might raise them at a later date. They concern the attitude of some insurance officers towards payments to employees who are injured at work. That can wait for another day. I believe that the government recognises that there are some areas of concern. They are recognised by the authority, the unions and this side of the House. I look forward to seeing the work health discussion document. I am sure that it will be greeted with a great deal of interest.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I also rise today to support the ministerial statement on work health. As the Opposition Leader suggests, most honourable members in the House can remember the considerable debate that took place on the introduction of this landmark legislation in the Northern Territory. Many people do not remember the events prior to the legislation which led to the necessity for a comprehensive review of attitudes to workers' compensation. I would like to touch on a few of those events before going on to some of the more specific points.

At an earlier stage, the general philosophy in relation to compensation for workers in Australia seemed to be that, regardless of how or where an accident occurred, whether in the workplace, during morning or afternoon tea breaks, lunch breaks, travelling to and from work or whenever, an injury to a worker was an opportunity for him not to be able to perform his normal work functions and an occasion for considerable compensation. The trend was towards longer and longer breaks from work and larger and larger compensation amounts. Mr Speaker, I am sure that you will also remember that there was an increasing trend towards litigation under common law.

Australian industry was suffering the incredible consequences of the increasing costs in settlements under common law and the long-term payments, not only for medical costs and compensating the worker, but for the costs of providing evidence in courts and employing solicitors. Whilst the workers may have been happy with the fact that they were obtaining increased benefits and, in some cases, large sums of money, the employers had to pay both for those benefits and the costs of litigation. It was becoming extremely obvious in Australia and overseas that the trend could not continue. The cost of workers' compensation to an employer was such that several businesses found it impossible to continue expanding. In some cases, businesses decided that they could no longer afford to operate with a work force and immediately began to retrench workers. Some tried to mechanise their workplaces and this resulted in a loss of jobs.

During the debate on the introduction of the Work Health Act, a number of honourable members, including myself, referred to the great difficulties faced by the insurance industry in continuing to perform. Certainly, governments which had sought to maintain work care or workers' compensation schemes were getting into considerable financial difficulties, to the tune of thousands of millions of dollars. Newspaper articles drew attention to the problems. An article in the financial section of The Australian was headed: 'Danger: Compensation at Work'. It argued that it was time for governments to come clean with the public over the enormous sums of money that they were having to set aside to help maintain cover for workers. Obviously, the situation had to change and decisions needed to be made.

Mr Speaker, you may remember that, at that time, this government had already bitten the bullet over the third party compensation scheme, the MACA scheme. I am pleased to say that, together with the Work Health Act, that was landmark legislation. The gloom and doom merchants all said that it could not work, that we would not be able to provide a satisfactory work health cover for our employees, that the poor solicitors of the town would all be marching up and down the street with begging bowls in their hands because they would no longer have any work, and that we would have a complete revolt on our hands.

As we have seen today from the very comprehensive statement prepared by the minister and his department, this has not been the case. In fact, the reverse has occurred. The legal industry has not collapsed of course. Employees are being paid a reasonable amount of money by way of compensation. The lump sum settlement, which was a very difficult decision to make, against the long-term rehabilitation decision, has probably worked out for the better, although I would like still to reserve my judgment on that. I know it was a difficult decision and there were many arguments for and against. However, I believe the long-term payment, together with the rehabilitation aspect, is the way to go in terms of getting workers back into the work force as quickly as possible.

Mr Speaker, you may remember that the lump sum settlement led to opportunities for the worker to be cajoled into not returning to work but, instead, sitting and waiting for the supposed pennies from heaven which would arise from the efforts of his solicitors in litigation. Injured workers tended to remain outside the work force because a return to work was considered to be an admission that the worker was not entitled to lump sum compensation for the injuries received. Consequently, there was more litigation than was necessary at the time. We have managed to solve that problem with the long-term payments. Whilst I still think that there are probably times when lump sum payments are applicable, I reserve my judgment on that for the time being. I believe that, basically, we have gone the right way, and I am extremely pleased with that.

With respect to the Work Health Authority's operations in the working environment, I have always supported its educational and survey role in relation to manufacturing businesses and commercial premises. In fact, in 1958 or 1959, after having been in the insurance industry for a couple of years, I found myself having to perform that function at a very young age. It became very obvious to me, as I visited manufacturing enterprises and commercial premises, that practices in the workplace were contributing to the high premium charges which employers faced. In many instances, facilities were deleterious to the health of workers and totally unsafe. There were obvious examples such as the lack of shields or guards in the welding industry or the use of grinders without protective guards over them. People working in a steel-fixing environment would come to work without wearing safety boots. Commonsense precautions were not being adopted by employers.

In those days and subsequently, until I left the insurance industry in the 1980s, one of the first things that I did when trying to sell the workers' compensation product to my clients was to point out to them the obvious advantages to be gained by ensuring that their workplaces were safe for their employees. I stressed that to employees in my own business and in the process of conducting courses for other personnel in the industry so that, when they went into industrial areas, they would be able to identify unsafe practices and possible danger points. For example, there was a need to address requirements for breathing apparatus and extractors in enclosed areas where spraying was taking place. I pointed out the necessity for first aid kits and

the presence of someone with first aid experience on the premises. I also stressed the need for suitable footwear, shields, guards, hard hats and so on when they were relevant to a specific type of work area. I emphasised the resultant long-term advantages to the employer, not only in terms of continuity of service by employees but through being able to demonstrate to insurers that the number of accidents was reduced as a result of safe work practices. Employers were then able to ask for a reduction in premiums.

In fact, during that period, I introduced what was then a landmark opportunity for a no-claim bonus system in the workers' compensation area, a system which had never previously been considered in the Territory. While some of my colleagues in the industry had some grave problems with my attitude on that, in the end they saw that it was a good move. Unfortunately, some of them did not understand the principles involved and started to offer reductions in premiums as a means of retaining business without getting into the health and safety aspects at the premises that they were insuring. They neglected to advise those commercial operators how they could actually assist their staff and themselves and so justify a reduction in premiums. However, by and large, the changed approach worked. Of course, it was one of the prime building blocks for the Work Health Authority when we put it into place. The authority has continued the task of continuous education and has provided a stock of knowledge not only for industries that are currently in the Territory, but for emerging industry coming into the Territory.

As we know, many people in the Northern Territory are entrepreneurial in their approach and have been very much to the forefront in creating new employment. In some cases, they are using manufacturing processes that have not been used here before. They can go to the Work Health Authority when they are first setting up to find out whether they should be addressing any particular matters in setting up the practices required to manufacture the goods they intend to introduce or to operate in the commercial area they intend to enter.

The Work Health Authority has an extensive library of its own and has access to extensive libraries not only interstate but overseas. It is possible to hook up at any stage to find out what is happening in particular fields, including radiation, noxious gases, explosives, electronics and so forth. I commend the authority for the way in which it has gone about that task.

The Leader of the Opposition raised a couple of points in his response to the minister and I would like to take a few moments to reflect on what he said. He stated that the Work Health Authority had not provided any information to workers. I draw his attention to a document issued by the Work Health Authority in March 1988. It sets out very clearly and concisely exactly how the work health scheme operates and how the legislation and the rehabilitation powers operate.

I would also like to comment on his allusion to the benefit versus premium reduction. I understand his dilemma. We all have the same dilemma. I would prefer him not to attempt parallels with other states. He particularly says that he would like to draw a parallel with Queensland where he says that subcontractors are not required to take out insurance cover. I think he will find that to be totally incorrect. Certainly, if people come into the Northern Territory and employ staff, they are required to insure those staff. He is quite incorrect when he says that firms coming to the Northern Territory from interstate do so on unfair terms. That is not the case. If they avoid work health insurance, they are in breach of the law and are liable to prosecution.

To return to the question of the premium reduction versus the benefits, it is very difficult to decide how low premiums should be aimed to assist employers in the operation of their businesses versus a fair compensation for employees. I take the Leader of the Opposition's point that there are cases in which people can say that they do not believe that they have received sufficient compensation. Other people, of course, receive what I consider to be generous compensation. The Work Health Authority will continue to monitor the situation and will have to weigh up the necessity for increasing benefits versus the premiums that will be able to be borne by the employers if they are to continue operating in a commercial way.

In the very limited time left to me, I would like to say that perhaps the Work Health Authority might consider at some stage looking at the reporting procedures. We have been operating since 1987 and, whilst the reporting procedures were necessary in the very early days and obviously still will be necessary for some time to come, there are some areas in which the requirement to report monthly on claims which have to be held open for a short period of 6 or 7 months just in case something further happens, is a little draconian in the overall context of the Work Health Act.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions to debate on the work health statement. It was pleasing that, while only one member from each side of the House spoke, there was a general consensus that the Work Health Authority is performing well. The Leader of the Opposition asked why I brought before the House a statement on work health when he believed that I should be introducing amendments ...

Mr Smith: You promised them to us.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, I would very much have liked to have introduced amendments this year. However, there has been a very long process of consultation to date on proposed amendments to the Work Health Act, both within the ministerial advisory council and among the various groups which are involved in work health and workers' compensation insurance, and that consultation has not been completed as yet. The proposed amendments and a draft bill will be before Cabinet within the next week or so. Subsequently, they will be the subject of further public consultation before coming to this House, hopefully in February next year. The work is ongoing. I do not want to rush it because the amendments are very important and the consultation process in relation to them is extremely important.

The Leader of the Opposition asked how many coordinators are working in the public sector and where they are located. Between 40 and 50 coordinators have been through the training courses that we have held to date, and those coordinators have been people at a fairly senior level. Each department and authority of the public service has at least 1 coordinator. The training programs that I refer to have had the involvement of unions and, generally speaking, have been very positive. It is perhaps a little unfortunate that one of the union representatives, and I refer to Peter Tullgren, took the opportunity at the first training session to bag other people attending the session and to question the motives for setting up this program in the public service. There are public service guidelines on rehabilitation and part of the whole exercise is for each department to put in place a policy and follow it through.

The Leader of the Opposition asked what the government is doing about workplace committees. One of the proposals in the amendments that will be the



subject of further consultation relates to workplace committees, and I expect that the opposition and others will comment on it in due course.

Mr Smith: When are these going out?

Mr McCARTHY: They should be out as soon as they have been approved by Cabinet.

Mr Smith: This year?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, definitely this year, although obviously that depends on Cabinet approval.

The Leader of the Opposition commented that benefits are lower. They may be lower, but they are also fairer than they have been in the past. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned Gary Warren at Pine Creek. I was not quite sure what the Leader of the Opposition was getting at there. I do not know whether he wanted us to adopt a much lower benefit structure ...

Mr Smith: I am not quite sure either, and that is the trouble.

Mr McCARTHY: Pardon?

Mr Smith: I am not quite sure either.

Mr McCARTHY: I am a little concerned about what is being expected from us. Do you want us to accept the much lower benefits that accrue to people in Queensland?

Mr Smith: No, what I am saying is that interstate people, who come here, should be under our Work Health Act.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, and they definitely are. It is not always possible to catch them, but we do the best we can to ensure that all businesses from interstate are operating under the terms of the Northern Territory Work Health Act. Whilst it is not always possible to pick up everybody, we do the best job we possibly can in that regard. There is no other way in which we can put restrictions on people coming across borders. The fact is that, whilst people may come in from interstate and break the law, the premiums are cheaper in Queensland and benefits are less in Queensland as well. I might add that that point was also dealt with by the member for Ludmilla. As I said, any employer who comes into the Territory must take out workers' compensation insurance in the Territory. Such employers are covered by the Work Health Act and will be jumped on if they are found not to be doing the right thing.

Probably the only other thing that I really need to mention today is the fact that the Work Health Authority has been in operation for less than 3 years and its achievements in that time have been considerable. There is still a fair way to go. We know that there is considerable information that we require. We need that information to be able to predict future trends and to be aware of what is going on in relation to work health generally. That information is constantly being collected and monitored. The efforts of the authority are beginning to bear fruit and will continue to do so. I believe that education is the key. We want to work much more closely with employers and employer organisations and, of course, the unions, to develop that aspect.

The Leader of the Opposition also spoke about publications. I can only say that the Work Health Authority has put a great deal of effort into

publications and, in fact, a booklet was mentioned by the member for Ludmilla. It was issued by the Work Health Authority within the last 12 months or so. There has been criticism stating that the unions published an information booklet much earlier but, as I have pointed out before, that booklet was printed with a great deal of support from the Work Health Authority.

Once again, I thank honourable members for their contributions. I am pleased that members on both sides of the House supported the statement and that there was no major criticism of the directions being taken. With that, I conclude my comments.

Motion agreed to.

#### LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion to call on General Business notice No 2, standing in my name, to present the Tenancy Amendment Bill (Serial 242).

Leave denied.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent my moving a motion to have General Business notice No 2, standing in my name, for the presentation of the Tenancy Amendment Bill (Serial 242), called on forthwith.

Mr Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed at the government's refusal to grant leave to bring on this bill for discussion. Because of the nature of the bill, I have been forced to move a motion to suspend standing orders. For most of us, and I understand that the member for Nightcliff is an exception, the knowledge of the practice described in this bill is very recent. Essentially, some landlords have been demanding what is called 'goodwill' money from their tenants. That is a practice which, I am sure, we would all deplore. It is a practice that should be stopped as quickly as possible.

The reason for seeking to suspend standing orders to allow the matter to be discussed today is that, the longer we leave it, the more opportunity we will give landlords to use this practice. For the life of me, I cannot understand why the government will not allow the suspension of standing orders to allow the matter to be brought on for discussion. I repeat that the matter is urgent. People in the community have been ripped off. Apparently, more and more examples are coming forward every day. Mr Speaker, you can bet your bottom dollar that, now that this practice is known, more and more landlords will be tempted to follow it. It can be stamped out very quickly and effectively by a very simple piece of legislation that the opposition has had drawn up.

The failure of the government to support a suspension of standing orders means that it accepts that this practice can continue. The government's failure to support a suspension of standing orders means that it is giving open licence to landlords to follow the existing practice which, although not illegal, is certainly immoral. That is the effect of opposing this motion to suspend standing orders.

Mr Finch: Give us an example.

Mr SMITH: If the member for Leanyer does not believe that there are any examples, his position directly contradicts that of his colleague beside him who said on Tuesday that he was aware that there are instances in which this has happened. There are examples of money being demanded. There are examples where the money has been paid. By not supporting this motion to suspend standing orders, the government is encouraging landlords to use the full extent of the law and to go on demanding goodwill payments that all of us, logically, would want to see stopped.

This government supposedly has a commitment to private enterprise. It supposedly has a commitment to small business. However, it is demonstrating in this debate over the suspension of standing orders that it has a commitment to neither because it is prepared to allow the continuation of a practice which has recently become known to all of us and which is inimical to the interests of small business in the Northern Territory. That, Mr Speaker, is what this motion to suspend standing orders is about. We are simply asking the government to accept that there is a problem. We are simply asking the government to take that problem on board and to resolve it.

Mr Perron: He has said that he is going to.

Mr SMITH: He has already said that he is going to, has he? In his own good time, when he gets enough evidence, he is going to do it.

Mr Manzie interjecting.

Mr SMITH: There just happens to be some urgency about this because, during the next few weeks, some shop leases will expire and some landlords will ask shopkeepers for goodwill money.

Mr Hatton: You created this crisis.

Mr SMITH: That is right. I created the crisis purely to bring the matter to the attention of the public and to get the problem fixed. Having created the crisis, I am now in a position to fix it with this legislation. Of course, members opposite have contributed absolutely nothing. They have given another demonstration that they have no concern at all for people in business in the Northern Territory.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, the government has embarked on a course of action. Let us be honest about this. The Leader of the Opposition knew nothing of this issue until Fred McCue from the Sunday Territorian rang him last Saturday afternoon. The Leader of the Opposition then decided to get in on the act. He gave the newspaper a few throwaway lines and now he has become the hero and the saviour. That is how it happened. Mr McCue also rang the Attorney-General on Saturday and spoke to him about the same issue. That is how recently this matter came to light. The Leader of the Opposition can go out there on his white charger and tell the business community what a wonderful person he is if he so wishes. That is his prerogative. Warren Snowdon, the Northern Territory representative in the House of Representatives, does it. We all know how hard he worked to have the technical directorate for the Timor Gap project based in Darwin. He would not know where the gaps in his teeth are, let alone where the Timor Gap is. It is all right for the Leader of the Opposition to trapeze in and do this sort of thing from time to time but the government has embarked on a course of action. The minister responsible for the Tenancy Act, in fact, will call a meeting of tenants. He will also call a meeting of both building owners and managers.

Mr Leo: Whoever gives the biggest donation will get his way.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for Nhulunbuy just accused the government of making its decision in this matter on the basis of what he alleged was the largest donation from the landlords involved. I would ask you to direct him to withdraw the remark and to withdraw any reference whatsoever to any such practice.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, speaking to the point of order, I can appreciate that the Attorney-General is indeed very sensitive about many matters that concern his government. However, I would assure him and you, Mr Speaker, that he must have misheard my comments.

Mr SPEAKER: I would ask the member for Nhulunbuy to withdraw the remark, which I heard clearly, to a donation from either the landlord or the tenant, whichever was the greater.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, the minister responsible for the Tenancy Act will be calling a meeting with those people.

There is also a proper course of procedure in this parliament. There is a General Business Day if the Leader of the Opposition cares to use it. Why should he be entitled to stand up at any time during the course of the sittings and introduce legislation? Let me inform him that that is what happens on this side of the House. It is not what happens on that side of the House. That is the difference between the 2 sides. The government has embarked on a course of action and there is no reason for this matter to proceed today. The Leader of the Opposition has not researched it at all. He obtained his facts from a newspaper reporter last Saturday.

Mr Smith: Wrong!

Mr COULTER: You deny that? I was with the reporter last evening and he told me that that is what he had done. If the Leader of the Opposition denies that he was contacted by Fred McCue from the Sunday Territorian and asked for a comment about this tenancy agreement, let him do so.

Mr Smith: You are wrong.

Mr COULTER: Who was it then?

Mr SMITH: The member for Wanguri gave this story to Fred McCue.

Mr COULTER: Is that right? But, then he rang you.

Mr Smith: You are an absolute clown.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that remark.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I withdraw the remark. He is no clown.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 16

Mr Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Vale

Noes 7

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Ede  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura

Motion agreed to.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 7

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Ede  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura

Noes 16

Mr Collins  
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Mr Firmin  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

#### MOTION

Noting Ministerial Statement on Regional Land Councils

Continued from 19 October 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I want to speak very briefly to the amendment moved by my colleague at the last sittings so that the process that this debate will follow this afternoon is well understood. I have re-read the

debate from the last sittings and I note the Chief Minister's comment in that debate that, by adjourning the debate from the last sittings to these sittings, he hoped to reach some agreement in respect of the government's motion and the opposition's amendment. It is regrettable that that agreement has not been able to be made. I look forward to hearing government members explain why that agreement has not been possible.

I indicate that I will address the wide-ranging issues arising from that debate with respect to Aboriginal land councils. I note with regret that the government will not be supporting the opposition's amendment. It has not found itself able to accept some accommodation of the opposition's amendment to the original motion. That is most regrettable because, in the intervening 4 weeks, I have found it of great satisfaction to be able to indicate to people that there is a much greater degree of unanimity within this parliament about the question of Aboriginal land rights in the Territory than is often understood by the electorate and some sections of the media. I look forward to hearing the government's further comments in this regard and I will make fuller comments when I have done so.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 7

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Ede  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura

Noes 16

Mr Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General) (by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended as follows:

- (1) omit the words 'regional land councils' from paragraph (1)(a) and insert in their stead the words 'independent land councils';
- (2) omit from paragraphs (1)(c), (d) and (g) the words 'regional land councils' and insert in their stead the words 'additional independent land councils';
- (3) omit from paragraph (1)(f) the words 'new land councils' and insert in their stead the words 'additional independent land councils'.

When the Chief Minister sought the adjournment of the debate on this motion at the last sittings, he did so because, although the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had introduced an amended motion, it was thought that there was a high degree of commonality between the 2 motions and the views of honourable members who had spoken in the debate. As the Chief Minister said, he was pleased to see a degree of agreement between members of the government, opposition members and members on the crossbenches on such a subject as the establishment of separate land councils. We were hoping for an unanimous motion, but now it seems that the opposition and the government are not able to agree on matters of detail. These amendments to the Chief Minister's motion will pick up some of the concerns of the opposition and cover the situation of new separate land councils as well as regional ...

Mr Ede: No. It is going the other way.

Mr MANZIE: The member for Stuart never wants to listen.

Mr Ede: I am listening. You know full well that that is exactly the opposite.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, it is a shame because possibly he would perform much better if he knew what he was talking about instead of talking about things which have no relevance to the facts. As I was saying, these amendments cover the situation of new separate land councils as well as regional or sub-councils of the type and in the same sense that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the member for Arnhem described in their contributions to the debate.

If I might dwell on the semantics of the matter, the Chief Minister's original motion was drafted in terms of separate land councils such as have been established in respect of the Tiwi Islands and such as are being sought in respect of south-east Arnhem Land and other places. The use of the word 'regional' in the motion was in the sense of an area of the Territory where Aboriginal groups might be linked by some common bond of language, tribal group or other factors. On reflection, the use of the word 'regional' may have resulted in some ambiguity. The simple solution appears to be to delete the word where it appears in paragraphs 1(a), (c), (d), (e) and (g) of the original motion and replace it with the word 'independent'.

I would also like to pick up a matter raised by the honourable members opposite and that is the concept of sharing resources between land councils. If the movement for separate land councils gains the momentum that some people predict, we could see the eventual establishment of some 12 or more councils as was suggested by the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government. In such circumstances, I would have to agree with the member for Arnhem - if I take what he said correctly - that we would not want to see a corresponding growth of legal and anthropological bureaus to cover all eventualities for each of the land councils. If a considerable number of separate land councils became established, it would be natural for such councils to set up some joint resource agencies to service land council needs on a shared basis.

The other day, the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs refused to establish a new land council in the Docker River region despite repeated calls from the Aboriginal residents in that area. I would like to take some time to examine the role of the existing land councils in relation to widespread calls from Territory Aborigines for self-determination. Why have the land councils so vehemently opposed the movement for self-determination from the very people

they are supposed to assist? I would suggest that it is because they do not support the principles of self-determination, independence and dignity. To do so would be to reduce their own power base and diminish the extraordinary control they have over the lives and decisions of Territory Aborigines.

One does not have to look far to discover what arrogant, paternalistic organisations the land councils have become. They put up claimants who do not have traditional ties to the land they are claiming and actively work against those found to be the traditional owners. They neglect to consult the very people they are supposed to be representing and give every appearance of making policy decisions of their own volition. Their stated intention is to get as much land under control as possible without regard to the need or the long-term effects of their actions.

Those calling for their own land councils want to be responsible for their own local regions. I accept that the 2 large land councils had a role in the past but the time has now come for separate, democratically-represented land councils. This is a natural progression which should not be resisted if it is the wish of Aboriginal people. If the land councils persist in attacking everyone who has a view which differs from their own, and in causing division and unrest by patronage, they most certainly will generate conflict. I believe the land councils must examine their motives and decide whether or not they support the principles of self-determination, independence and dignity. One of the functions of a land council is to assist Aborigines in its region in pursuing a claim. It certainly does not exist to determine policy and to impose that policy on Territory Aborigines. If there is a call for a break away land council, the land councils should be objective enough to assist in facilitating the call.

It is worth looking at some of the problems which have been faced by Aboriginal people in relation to land councils. The feelings of many people were spelt in a letter to the editor of the NT News from the President of the Angurugu Community Council. It stated that the Angurugu community would not be nominating anyone to run for election to the Northern Land Council at the next council elections. It says: 'Our letter states that, from 6 September, we no longer require or acknowledge the NLC as the land council for this region'. Elsewhere it says: 'The NLC does not have authority to state that the above people are representative of the Angurugu Community Government Council and should cease making such statements'. In other words, Angurugu people are quite clear that they do not believe that the NLC should be representing them.

I think that the member for Arnhem and the member for Arafura would have to agree. I do not think the member for Arafura would contemplate the idea that the Tiwi people should be represented by, say, the NLC. I think he believes that the Tiwi people are quite capable of expressing their own views and thoughts and operating their own land council. Of course, they do so very successfully. I am sure that there is no argument that the Angurugu people, the people of Groote Eylandt, could not develop a land council carrying out the same functions as the Tiwi Land Council. I believe that, if that is what those people want to do, they should be given the opportunity to do it.

The people of Milingimbi outstations, who were represented by the North Australian Legal Aid Office in the application to the Aboriginal Land Commissioner for the closure of seas around Howard Island, were forced to seek help through legal aid after the Northern Land Council failed to respond to their requests for assistance. I believe that the NLC was purportedly set up to provide such assistance. However, among the people in that area, there is



a great deal of dissatisfaction because they seem to have been forgotten by the NLC.

The Lake Amadeus Land Claim is another example. When representing the Aboriginal people in this claim, the CLC did not consult with all the senior Aboriginal people. In particular, it ignored Mr Helmut Pararoultja and Mr Nahasson Ungwanaka. The CLC identified 9 claimants of which only one, Bruce Breaden, was found to be a traditional owner by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner. The 2 men whom I mentioned are very important figures in the break away land council movement in the Haasts Bluff area. Again, it is an example of a land council not carrying out its role in a particular area and, as a result, creating tension and dissatisfaction.

Mr Bell: Let's face it, that is precisely what you people are involved in.

Mr MANZIE: The member for MacDonnell is getting upset. He really should step back from his paternalistic attitude as the white man who knows all and who knows what is good. He should start listening to some of the people in his area and realising that they have the ability to speak and think for themselves. If they express an opinion, they should be listened to. I believe pretty strongly in the ability of people to make their own decisions. Whether or not I agree with those decisions or directions is not the point. It is important that people should have, and feel as though they have, the ability to speak for themselves or to be listened to.

The example of the Tiwi Land Council should be followed. There is no great bureaucracy. It has been successful. It has worked well. There is no conflict. The people are satisfied that they have a group of people who represent them. I am sure that, if there were a suggestion that we should close down the Tiwi Land Council and let the Northern Land Council take over its role and run its affairs in the same way as it runs those of people on Groote Eylandt or Elcho Island, there would be a furore. I am sure that the member for Arafura would be the first person to be beating down the doors. But the reverse is happening consistently, and it sounds as though many members opposite are supporting that concept.

The problems faced by Aboriginal people are not recent in origin. In the earlier days of the NLC, it had major responsibility to negotiate several agreements for the mining of uranium in the Alligator Rivers province. During 1982-83, negotiations over the proposed Koongarra project were halted temporarily following legal action because of a disagreement among the traditional owners. In 1979, in relation to access to the Nabarlek Mine, one group of owners took action against Queensland Mines because, as owners of the land over which the access road passed, they had not been consulted by the NLC in negotiations over the mine. Continuing problems like that are evidence of a flaw in the current arrangements under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in terms of the ability of land councils to represent people in specific areas.

Over the last few years, we have all seen the land councils become larger bureaucracies. They have become bloated in the administrative sense. It has become all-important to look after that administrative area, and it is people on the ground who are not receiving the service. That is why this movement has started. That is why people out in the bush are saying that they want to represent themselves. They do not believe the councils are doing the right thing by them. There are numerous examples. It is not the government that is saying that. It is not members of this House who are saying that. The people in the communities are saying it. Many people ignored them for a while, but

the noise and the clamour for separate land councils is now becoming so strong that it cannot be ignored. It has not been ignored by members on this side of the House and I believe - and I am very encouraged to see this - that members opposite are finally starting to listen to the call of the people on the ground. The member for MacDonnell may laugh, but how many times in this House ...

Mr Bell: We have been listening for a lot longer than you have, Daryl, and hearing and understanding.

Mr MANZIE: How many times in this House has the member for MacDonnell, without listening very carefully, jumped to the defence of the land councils and castigated government members for daring to suggest that there might be another point of view being expressed by Aboriginal people, or that some Aboriginal people were not being represented by the land councils? The record shows it has happened many times.

Mr Bell: Does it?

Mr MANZIE: It does indeed.

Mr Bell: Give us the evidence. When?

Mr MANZIE: I am sure that that could be arranged, but I think that you would be man enough to admit that, at times, you have never considered any viewpoint but that which holds that the land councils are never wrong. I am heartened that you are actually supporting the concept ...

Mr Bell: Well why didn't you support the amendment that we proposed?

Mr MANZIE: I am heartened that you are supporting the concept that Aboriginal people should be listened to and should have the ability to determine who represents them and who speaks for them in their own regions. I certainly hope that that is an attitude which members of the opposition will continue to hold. Possibly we will see a diminishing of the usual aggressive approach which they automatically take in matters relating to Aboriginal affairs and we might start making some bipartisan approaches in these areas. Until that happens, until we get away from the automatic knee-jerk reaction, and start looking at issues in detail and responding to them in an appropriate way, we will never achieve a satisfactory resolution to the many problems that we are all aware of in the remote areas of the Territory. I certainly support the amendments and the motion.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, the amendments which the minister has just moved to the motion of the Chief Minister, in respect of this particularly complex issue, are absolute nonsense. They deserve no support whatsoever because they fly in the face of any attempt to make a constructive effort on the part of this Assembly to come to grips with the issues involved.

I appreciate that, because of the historical antipathy of CLP governments towards the land councils, the Minister for Lands and Housing will do everything in his power to destroy them. That is unfortunate. It is a most unconstructive approach to statutory authorities of any sort, let alone statutory authorities which are charged with the very difficult task of administering land resources for and on behalf of people who have been historically dispossessed and whose capacity to communicate with governments and bureaucrats has been very limited in the past. In the context of the last 200 years, the difficulties which the land councils faced were considerable.

For the sake of this debate, it is worth referring to the statutory framework which is in place. The land councils are not cast in stone and the opposition in no way seeks to present that view. In the terms of these amendments and the motion, it is the government which is being completely intransigent. It is demanding independent land councils with separate resource agencies, to use the minister's term. He said that they may have joint resource agencies where they use these on a shared basis. I will return to that point in a minute, but let me remind honourable members of what the Land Rights Act says about the establishment of land councils. Section 21(1) of the act says: 'The minister shall, on the commencement of this section by notice published in the Gazette, divide the Northern Territory into at least 2 areas and establish an Aboriginal land council for each area'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no prohibition on the creation of further land councils. It is envisaged, in fact, by the Land Rights Act ...

Mr McCarthy interjecting.

Mr Reed: Well, why aren't they doing it?

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will return to the interjections of members opposite in due course. The fact is that members of the opposition, including previous speakers from this side of the House, have a deeper understanding of the processes under way in south-east Arnhem Land than any member opposite, as the member for Arnhem said. I was very interested to hear the Minister for Lands and Housing attempting to get his tongue around the names of a few of my constituents for the sake of his argument. I will return to that issue in due course too.

I quoted the Aboriginal Land Rights Act merely to point out that the opposition supports the act and the possibility of further land councils, not for the ugly political motives which seem to characterise the attitude of the government, but to ensure that Aboriginal people continue to have strong control over the land that was historically denied to them until the Land Rights Act was enacted. The land councils have been, and in many cases continue to be, a very valuable and cost-effective vehicle for recognising those aspirations.

Mr Collins: What about the Senate inquiry?

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am asked about the Senate inquiry. I think the member for Sadadeen, among others, might be in for a few surprises in that regard.

Let me now turn to the recent publicity given to the Aboriginal people in the Pultardi vicinity, when an article appeared in the NT News under the heading: 'Traditional Owners to Quit CLC'. We were talking about costs, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would like to know, and I hope the Chief Minister will inform us, how much money the Northern Territory government is in fact contributing to this exercise. I appreciate that it has provided financial support for the people in south-east Arnhem Land and I presume that it is spending public money on paying for the services of the Darwin firm of lawyers, James Noonan, which is referred to in that article. It is also paying the bills for Mr Stephen Davis who has been doing some anthropological work in that area. I would like to know, for the sake of comparing the relative costs, how much has been spent. I imagine that independent land councils would be not inexpensive and that the current arrangements, as far as resources are concerned, are probably quite cost efficient.

The overriding issue is the expression of the will of people on the ground. In respect of the Lake Amadeus and Pultardi areas referred to by the Minister for Lands and Housing, I take the issues far more seriously than he does and have a far better understanding of them. It is instructive that the minister did not refer to the kafuffle recently generated in the Haasts Bluff and Mt Liebig area by an employee of a mining company who was seeking not only to contravene the Aboriginal Lands Rights Act but also the Northern Territory Mining Act. I look forward to hearing the results of the investigations into that matter.

I could talk for a long time about the aspirations of the people in the Pultardi area but, unfortunately, the time available to me in the context of this debate prevents me from doing so. I would be more than happy to do that. Pastor Nahasson Ungwanaka has been a friend of mine for many years. I know his family very well and I understand his association with that area, as well as his association with the area that was the subject of the Lake Amadeus Land Claim. Equally, the other people mentioned in the NT News article are well known to me and have been for many years. I appreciate the issues that are involved.

Let us get to the nitty gritty of this. Mr Deputy Speaker, if we are talking about regional land councils, sub-land councils, independent land councils or whatever, there are good and bad reasons for doing so. As this debate progresses, it is becoming abundantly clear to me that this government is pursuing this debate for the bad reasons. Those bad reasons relate to the government's twisted belief that Aboriginal land rights and Aboriginal people's capacity to control their land will be diminished if there are smaller land councils. I do not believe the government's rhetoric about the democratic expression of smaller groups of people. We heard such rhetoric from the Minister for Lands and Housing this afternoon and I do not believe that anybody in the community will believe it either.

The Minister for Lands and Housing referred to the land councils as arrogant and paternalistic organisations. He referred to them as having an undemocratic power base and said that they neglect to consult. The fact is that the land councils, with their full land council meetings of representatives from each community, are democratic in one sense.

Mr Vale: In European ...

Mr BELL: It is terrific to hear the member for Braiuling interfering and giving me a lesson in anthropology.

Mr Vale: You need it.

Mr BELL: I really do appreciate it. I long to sit at his feet and to glean pearls of wisdom. I am so delighted, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the member for Braiuling is prepared to give us a few gems of his understanding of the issues involved. He has never contributed to one of these debates. He moves around the sidelines and interjects. He will not have the guts to rise in this debate and say anything. He will not say anything constructive. You can rest assured of that, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Let me get on to the good reasons for an active consideration of the sorts of aspirations held by various groups of Aboriginal people, including those in the Haasts Bluff area. In the Central Land Council area, between 5 and 10 separate languages are spoken. As I have said in this Assembly before, one of the big problems for land council areas is that they are a united nations.

There are strong linguistic and cultural factors which make it difficult to maintain unity and it is important to have a regionalised perspective in those organisations.

The Chief Minister said during the last sittings that there is not necessarily a big difference between what we are proposing. However, after I heard the Minister for Lands and Housing speak today, I am beginning to think that there is. The government is simply interested in dividing and conquering, rather than in a constructive understanding of Aboriginal people. I believe that there needs to be a central secretariat based in the major towns in the Territory and that it should provide legal services, anthropological advice and so forth to people requiring those things. Human and physical resources need to be made available in those regional areas. I find it difficult to understand why the government is being so pedantic and obsessive about independent land councils. The communities concerned have enough problems without this government playing politics with them.

The fact that there are exploration licences, for example, in the Docker River area means that people are starting to take an interest in that area. I note that the NT News article says that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has written saying that 'because there were no permanent Aboriginal residents for the proposed area, the first criterion of the Land Rights Act cannot be satisfied'. That is a matter of concern to me because I know the people involved with that area. The expression in section 21 of the Land Rights Act is 'living in the area'. The residence criterion under section 21 obviously is a different question from the traditional ownership criterion relating to a local descent group. There is no doubt that people like Mick Miama, Donkey Donk, Sam Protty and Nahasson Ungwanaka, who is part of the local descent group on his mother's side, satisfy that criterion. The question of residency is not as important in terms of Aboriginal aspirations as the criterion of local descent. Obviously, there is a determination on the part of the people named in that article to assert their ownership of that area, and more power to them.

The government is obsessed with forcing independent land councils on people. That is what it is doing in the terms of the amendments to the original motion.

Mr McCarthy: It is not. Read it in the light of the whole of the motion.

Mr BELL: Of course it is! The member for Victoria River interjects because he is insisting that they have independent land councils.

Mr McCarthy: Read it in the light of the whole motion.

Mr BELL: The fact is that the member for Victoria River, the Minister for Lands and Housing and the Chief Minister have not fully thought this through. Not everybody who is covered by the Land Rights Act wants to have an independent land council. These people on the government benches are so hell-bent on a political program of destroying the land councils that they are prepared to use aspirations like those of decent people at Docker River as anvils. They will come unstuck seriously. This debate could have been a very constructive one which could have well served the Territory and my constituents at Docker River and at Haasts Bluff. This is absolute nonsense! Aboriginal Territorians deserve better of this Assembly. The cheap politics that these people are playing with this very sensitive issue, with the lives and aspirations of the most disadvantaged Australians, do them no credit whatsoever.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, in speaking to the amendments, we are talking about the rights and the ability of Aboriginal people to take charge of their own affairs at their own pace. Obviously, we all agree that it is inevitable that there will be additional land councils in the years to come. The days of giant land councils representing or attempting to represent the interests of Aboriginal people over 50% of the Northern Territory are numbered. Those land councils have become or are seen by many of their constituents as dinosaurs. They cannot respond fast enough and sympathetically enough to the wishes of those constituents.

The movement in support of new, smaller land councils is unstoppable. Opponents to that move may delay the progress. They may delay the end result. I understand that there are certainly elements in the Northern and Central Land Councils who are attempting to delay that result. I think the member for the House of Representatives, the honourable Mr Snowdon, has done a fair amount of work in the past in trying to delay the inevitable result of the application by the south-east Arnhem Land people to have their own land council. I believe the federal minister, Hon Gerry Hand, opposes the concept of additional land councils and, in respect of the proposed south-east Arnhem Land council, has not facilitated the gathering of the necessary information in an appropriate way. Notwithstanding these respective persons' opposition to the move and their tactics to delay it, they will not succeed. Even the member for Arnhem, I understood, was originally sceptical about the movement. He is now a supporter, having picked up the message from many of his constituents. I think that, in supporting the move publicly, he is probably being a wise politician.

The difference between the stance of the government and the opposition is best illustrated by the words in the amendment that was defeated on the floor of the House. It referred to 'acknowledging the desire of many Aboriginal people for greater control over local issues relating to land' and went on to use the key phrase 'within a larger land council structure'. Those are the words with which we had a particular objection and, in our admittedly brief discussions with members of the opposition between the last sittings and today, it seemed that we would not reach agreement on this matter.

To make our position completely clear, the amendments which we are presently debating remove the word 'regional' throughout the motion and substitute the word 'independent'. Given that there was a debate about regional land councils, sub-land councils or land councils within a larger council structure, we wanted to make the Northern Territory government's position on this matter absolutely clear. It is that we believe that each new land council should be independent in the same sense as the Tiwi Land Council is independent.

We do not see the need to impose a bureaucracy from the top as each of these new land councils gets on its feet. If in the future, multiple land councils seek to establish bodies, in their common interest, to pool resources, engage lawyers and anthropologists and whatever other expertise they require, so be it. Similarly, if smaller land councils seek to use the services of larger land councils, so be it. We have no difficulty with that whatsoever. Indeed, it is inevitable. If the Northern Territory eventually contains 12 or 13 land councils, as seems to be predicted by some parties who have assessed tribal areas of the Northern Territory, I believe that it is probably inevitable that a collective group will form from within their ranks to represent them. It is perfectly proper that that should happen. The important point, however, is that it should be their decision. We should not facilitate a structure which forces people to form land councils within the

umbrella of larger land councils. We should not be seeking to impose the condition that they be looked after by somebody else.

The member for MacDonnell described it as his wish to see a central secretariat from which these various groups would seek their particular resource requirements. He described the government as being pedantic on this very issue, that these organisations should all be independent. Mr Speaker, I do not look at it as being pedantic. I look at it as an important matter of principle. I am trying not to force additional land councils into the arms of bodies whose assistance or direction they may not wish to seek.

In his insistence that the government was being pedantic, the member for MacDonnell intimated that we were pursuing some sort of divide-and-rule approach. I refer him to the first paragraph of the original motion in which we seek that this Assembly 'notes and supports the growing interest among Aboriginal Territorians ...'. I will not read any more than that. Paragraph (d) calls on the federal government 'to support and facilitate the democratic expression of the wishes of Aboriginal Territorians'. Paragraph (f) calls on the federal minister 'to ensure that the wishes of Aboriginal Territorians are not frustrated'.

That is the kind of thing we are talking about in this motion and the amendments. We are talking about facilitating the wishes of people, not imposing structures on them from above. That is the difference between our attitude to this matter and that of the opposition which wants to force people aspiring to new councils into some sort of coalition with land councils and central secretariats or, to use its own words, 'within a larger land council structure'. That sounds to me like trying to pull a few strings from some other source. It does not sound like independence to me. Could I suggest, Mr Speaker, that if you went to the Tiwi Land Council today, a land council which has had some experience of running its own affairs without interference from outside, although within the very real constraints of the Land Rights Act, and if you asked that council whether it would like to be within a larger land council structure, it would give you a very clear message about what you could do with your larger land council structure. Perhaps the member for Arafura, who would be very familiar with the general attitude of members of the Tiwi Land Council, could advise us on this matter.

The member for MacDonnell accused the government of ugly political motives in this regard. We did not have to move this motion in the first place. The government sponsored this motion with very genuine intentions. This government has done a great deal to advance the lot of Aborigines in the Territory in the 11 years since self-government. A great deal more is being done now and will be done in the future. I have been very proud to have been part of a government which has made such progress, and I hope to make some more. You do not make progress by standing still and leaving the status quo alone. Clearly, there is a very significant movement among Aboriginal people across the Northern Territory, a movement in which they are seeking a greater degree of control over their own affairs. I am not just referring to greater control in terms of the role of government, although they seek that too. They seek fewer ties in relation to government funding and, in many cases, they seek more control of town responsibilities. That is fine. They also seek much greater control of their own affairs and a much greater degree of freedom from the likes of the land councils which they feel have been frustrating them. That is why this motion is before the House, and for no other reason. I reject the member for MacDonnell's claim that we are debating this subject today only because the CLP has ugly political motives. That is untrue. I support the amendments, Mr Speaker, and urge all members to do likewise in the interests of their constituents.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister has the capacity, from time to time, to crystallise exactly what the issues are. He has done so for me on this occasion and I thank him for it. He has made a great play of saying that the government is merely responding to Aboriginal groups who are unhappy with the present Northern Land Council structures. I accept - and I will come back to this point - that there is an enormous amount of dissatisfaction in certain areas with what is perceived as the bureaucracy of the land councils and their relative tardiness in responding to issues. Not all of that is their own fault, and I will come back to that too.

The interesting point is that this government is very keen, in a political sense, to support the rights of Aborigines who want to set up what we are now referring to as independent land councils. However, the aspirations of large numbers of Aborigines who want to see a proper regional structure within the existing land council system have been completely wiped by this government. The motion and the amendments state the situation in terms of 2 options only: the land councils as they now exist or smaller independent land councils. There is, however, a third option which we put forward in our amendment. That is to encourage the federal government to enact legislation which would enable the existing regional councils to regionalise. That is an important option.

Mr McCarthy: There is nothing to stop them doing that now.

Mr SMITH: There is a great deal to stop them now because the present Land Rights Act does not allow it.

Mr McCarthy: All they have to do is simply put control back where it belongs.

Mr SMITH: It is a matter of putting control where it belongs in the eyes of the people concerned. As I have said, there are people who simply want the option, which we support, of a greater sense of independence within existing land councils. What stops them is the federal act as it stands at present.

Mr Perron: In what respect?

Mr SMITH: The federal act considerably proscribes the extent to which land councils can regionalise. That is what stops them and that is what our amendment was about. It sought to give groups of Aborigines in the Northern Territory 2 options from the present situation, not the single option which the government is trying to force on them. Our amendment offered them the alternatives of independent land councils or the very real possibility sought by many Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory - proper regionalisation of existing land councils.

Let us stop this humbug about the government following the wishes of Aborigines and allowing Aborigines to express their aspirations.

Mr Perron: That is what we are trying to do.

Mr SMITH: You will do it when it fits your political agenda but you are not interested in doing it in terms of the legitimate aspirations and requests of Aborigines. You will do it when it fits in with what you want but, if people want something that you are not happy with, you wipe them. It is indeed unfortunate that you have chosen to reject our amendment, which offers the 2 options that I spoke about, and shame on you for doing so.



I do not have any problem in standing up here and saying that there is widespread concern in some places with the operations of the land councils. For a number of reasons, they have grown very big very quickly. They have not put in place - and in some cases the federal act has stopped them putting in place - proper procedures and structures which will enable them to effectively regionalise. To be fair to them, they have been preoccupied with the demands placed on them by the Northern Territory government, for example in relation to land rights claims. They have not had the time that they expected to have to deal with the issues that concern people at the local level. That is one of the major problems that the land councils have had to face.

Clearly, there is a strong message in this debate for the land councils. That strong message is simply this: they have to lift their game or else they will find that there is a rapidly growing number of break away land council movements. That message has already got through to the land councils and they are already attempting to lift their game.

There is an additional problem, and the member for MacDonnell identified it when he referred to the Balkanisation of the land councils. That would be in nobody's interest. Somewhere or other, there is a proper balance. The Northern Territory does not need a large number of land councils, each going off in its own direction, each being small and relatively powerless and each causing problems to the government of the day, whatever its political complexion. We need to find the balance between effective representation, effectively resourced land councils, and the effective realisation of the wishes and aspirations of local Aboriginal groups. Let us not get carried away with the idea that this particular motion is the sole, simple answer to the problem. It is not. It has been drawn up for blatant political purposes and one day it may well come back to bite this government in the face.

If we are to go down the path of setting up new land councils, we need at the start to set in place the procedures which will apply in every case. That is one of the problems which the federal minister has. There is a very strong case for establishing a council in south-east Arnhem Land. Obviously, there is also dispute over the borders of the area which the council might be based on, and exactly who should be included. Certainly, there is a very strong case for establishing such a council. The federal minister has the problem of how such a council could be established whilst lessening the likelihood of court action initiated by a disaffected party. He has to be seen to be acting in a manner that is beyond reproach.

Mr McCarthy: It did not worry him when he was setting up ATSIC. He was able to set his own boundaries after a short consultation.

Mr SMITH: There is a slight difference between setting up ATSIC by an act of parliament and setting up a separate land council by administrative decision. I am not surprised that the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government does not distinguish the difference because we all know that he is not very bright. For his benefit, I point out that there is a significant difference.

This motion and the opposition amendment, which was unfortunately rejected, address some very important issues which could contribute significantly to resolving how Aborigines fit into the broader pattern of government in the Northern Territory and Australia during the next 20 to 30 years, if not longer. It is unfortunate in the extreme that the Northern Territory government has reverted to basic politics in this matter. It is prepared only to recognise a single legitimate Aboriginal aspiration - that

for independent land councils - when, quite clearly, there are other legitimate aspirations such as those of the people who want to see some changes to the present system but do not want to take the quite radical step of establishing independent land councils. That is the shame of this amended motion, and that is why this opposition will not support it. The amendment which we proposed quite clearly satisfied the concerns that we thought were important and provided Aborigines with a very basic choice on how they could obtain the most effective land council representation, not this half-baked proposal that is made for a blatant political purpose.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I am continually amazed at the opposition's attempts to paint the CLP government as somehow anti-Aboriginal. In doing so, it continues to promote its paternalistic, centralist attitudes about how it knows best what is good for Aboriginal people.

Mr Smith: That is exactly the point that I was trying not to make.

Mr HATTON: There is no doubt that quite a number of Aboriginal groups in the Northern Territory are expressing a very strong desire for their own separate land councils. They do not want to be associated with either of the existing conglomerate land councils. We know that people in areas of central Australia are very keenly promoting the concept of having their own land councils within their own tribal boundaries. Of course, south-east Arnhem Land is the most publicised example.

The motion that was originally brought before this parliament recognised that those people were expressing that desire, indicated that we supported their right to do so and called for action to enable their wishes to be brought to fruition. The opposition moved an amendment. It recognised that it had to accept some devolution of power but it did not want to break down the cosy Central Land Council, Northern Land Council ...

Mr Ede: It does not say that at all. It says: 'accepts the right of Aboriginal people to establish land councils'.

Mr HATTON: That is right. Let us go through it. 'Acknowledging the desire of many Aboriginal people for greater control over local issues relating to land within a larger land council structure', it proposes that the Assembly should call upon the federal government 'to ensure that amendments to the Aboriginal Lands Rights (Northern Territory) Act are processed such as will allow the further devolution of powers over local issues from the central council, while utilising the central body for varying degrees of administrative support and the resolution of matters of broader concern'.

Obviously, the opposition was worried that support for the government's motion would get it into trouble with its masters in the Northern and Central Land Councils. It wanted to put together something which would enable it to tell people on the ground that it supported some devolution of power whilst also enabling it to tell the land councils that the whole thing would still hang together. That is what members opposite are on about and that is why their amendment could not go anywhere.

The motion currently before the parliament says clearly that what the Aboriginal people want to do with the organisation of the administration of their own land is a matter for them.

Mr Smith: It does not.

Mr HATTON: It should be a matter for them.

Mr Smith: Why doesn't your motion say that?

Mr HATTON: It does.

Mr Smith: If they want to be part of a regional structure, you will not let them.

Mr HATTON: That is not true.

Mr Smith: Tell us how it is not true.

Mr Ede: Tell us.

Mr HATTON: The Chief Minister already addressed that. Mr Speaker, I will deal with this issue again because, obviously, honourable members opposite find some difficulty in being able to read and listen. We should be used to that after many years in this parliament. The motion begins by saying that this Assembly 'notes and supports the growing interest amongst significant numbers of Aboriginal Territorians in the establishment of smaller, locally responsible, regional land councils'. There is quite clearly that interest. It goes on to say that the Assembly 'believes that such councils will provide democratic representation of the interests of Aboriginal people in relation to those areas and responsibility given to land councils generally under the Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act'. This is the motion we are talking about.

Mr Ede: I know.

Mr Smith: Where is the regionalisation option there?

Mr HATTON: Where is the exclusion of it? The whole problem with members opposite is that they cannot accept the fact that, on this side of the House, we are really saying that Aboriginal people should have the right to determine for themselves what they want to do. They are trying to say that they know what is best for Aborigines and will set up an administrative structure for them. They have been manipulating Aboriginal people for years and they are seeking to continue to do so. They are dead scared of somebody suggesting that Aboriginal people should be allowed to set up their own structures and organise themselves in their own way. They are frightened of that. I do not know why.

For example, the people in south-east Arnhem Land have developed the self-confidence to say that they want to make decisions for themselves. In the 1970s, when the pressure was on to push them into the Northern Land Council, the Tiwi people were strong enough, self-confident enough and assertive enough to say that they would not be forced into the amorphous Northern Land Council. They wanted to make their own decisions for themselves.

It is instructive that the one area where there has not been a continuing litany of political controversy, problems and battles has been that which comes under the Tiwi Land Council. Through that land council, the people have proceeded to develop real commercial and other developments on their own land. That is very instructive. They did not need some central secretariat. They did not need dozens of anthropologists and lawyers. They also did not have direct access to royalty payments. They set to work and built for themselves. If the member for Arafura would rejoin the debate, I am sure he would support

what I am saying in respect of that. The reality is that the Tiwi Land Council is a shining example to other Aboriginal people who believe that they can do just as well in respect of their own land. They ask why they need other people to tell them what they can or cannot do on their own land.

We are simply saying that, if they want to establish themselves in that way and make decisions in that way, they should have the right to do so. If people want to give some meaning to the term 'self-determination', they should give the people the right to determine things themselves. If they want to set up these structures, that is fine. If they do not want to set up these structures and want to stay within the existing bodies, that is fine too.

Mr Ede: Not if they want regionalisation.

Mr HATTON: If they subsequently form a conglomerate organisation through some sort of confederation of land councils, that is fine. That is a matter for them. In this debate, members opposite are working on the premise that the Land Rights Act has to stay as it is today. That is their problem. They regard the act as holy writ and incapable of being amended. They seem to think that the legislation will remain in its present form forever.

The reality is that acts of parliament can be changed to reflect the will of the people. Quite clearly, that can occur if it is the will of the people. I know, and honourable members opposite know, when they are not in public and have to answer to their land council masters, that many people in their electorates do not want to have a bar of the 2 major land councils. They find them anathema. They find them to be paternalistic, overbearing, modern-day colonialists and they have had a gutful. They are strong enough now to stand up for themselves, and the land councils cannot handle it. Gerry Hand is in trouble because he has been using the land councils as his advisers rather than the DAA. He is getting himself into trouble and the members opposite are getting themselves into trouble because they have pinned their political future so firmly to the networking of the land councils to maintain their electoral strength.

Mr Speaker, they can see this network unwinding and they are panicky. They are seeking to form some amorphous alternative structure which will enable them to hang on to the threads of centralism in the face of a growing tide of demands for independence from the various troubled communities throughout the Northern Territory. This parliament should be prepared to stand up and allow the true expression of self-determination to shine through. The motion before us aims to do exactly that, and to allow Aboriginal people to decide for themselves what they want.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I must admit that, just now and again in discussions, you get the feeling that possibly there are some elements within the Country Liberal Party who genuinely would like to adopt a bipartisan position on issues such as land rights and land councils and to remove them from the political arena. Every time that you get that feeling, you are knocked over by a truck and you find out that in fact that it is not the case at all. It is a matter of politics. Could there be any other reason for knocking back the very reasoned amendment that we put forward and then introducing these alternative amendments which move even further away from any mention of the concept of regionalisation and put an end to any possibility that anybody could think that that applied in any way to the government's model.

It is absolutely ridiculous that the government should do that because it has now put itself in a position where it is not prepared to accept any intermediate position. The government is saying that, if you do not like the way the current land councils work, you have to get out altogether and form your own independent land council. The government may feel that that is all very well in terms of the south-east Arnhem break away movement, and the information I have from my colleagues and people who have been out there is that a majority of the people in that area wants a separate land council. But do the honourable members opposite genuinely believe that the matter will end there? For example, I have heard that the people of Ngukurr are extremely keen and believe that the headquarters of the new council will be located in their community. Do the honourable members opposite believe that, in a couple of years time, the people of Angurugu will be quite happy to see the headquarters located at Ngukurr? Or will we see a further break away movement, and hear the people of Groote Eylandt and possibly Bickerton say that they are breaking away from that council and setting up independently. Then what about ...

A member: If that is what they want to do, that is their right.

Mr EDE: If that is what they want to do? Right. Let us take it a step further. We then get to a situation where people around Umbakumba and some of those areas want to break away as well ...

A member interjecting.

Mr EDE: That is all right as well? Right, fine.

As the member for MacDonnell said, we will have then a complete Balkanisation whereby there will be a multitude of tiny groups each of which is burdened with administrative overheads and loaded up with the costs of attempting to carry out their powers and functions. One of 2 things could happen in that situation. It could become an incredibly expensive exercise. The point is that it would reflect the real political will of the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party. Members opposite want it to happen that way because they see in it the inevitable demise of the land council movement ...

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: ... and the inevitable disempowerment of Aboriginal people and the destruction of land rights. Let us not be fooled, Mr Speaker, because that is what they are on about, and that is the process they are pursuing.

A member: Very cynical.

Mr EDE: Very cynical of me, Mr Speaker? Yes. I thank the honourable minister opposite. I get that ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to direct his remarks to the Chair.

Mr EDE: My apologies, Mr Speaker. The honourable minister opposite was extremely provocative. I tender my apologies. That is what will occur if we continue down that path as if it is the only possible way.

Let us look now at the alternatives as we are developing them. We would acknowledge, at one end of the spectrum, people's rights to form separate land councils under the processes of the Land Rights Act and, at the other end of

the spectrum, their right to remain completely within the current framework. Within that framework, we would allow a smorgasboard of powers and functions, using a method similar to that which applies under our own Local Government Act. People could then indicate the powers and functions that they want within their local situation. Language groups could identify a particular range of powers and functions which they wanted to control, and those could change over time. For example, people may decide that mining is a real issue and may wish to have control over it, but they may also decide that issues associated with stock routes and excisions are completely irrelevant to them and that they do not even wish to have the powers and functions which relate to them. They might be quite happy for those powers and functions to remain with the more central grouping from which the powers and functions flow. At a later date, however, they might request that further powers and functions be devolved on them.

This process will provide the ability for people to make decisions about their situation at any any given time, as was indicated in the preamble to our amendment. It is a shame that honourable members opposite would not support this approach which recognises the ancient and modern diversity of aspirations of Aboriginal people. Members opposite do not seem to understand that. The ancient and modern diversity of aspirations exists throughout the Northern Territory and has to be recognised when we talk about institutions.

Institutions develop in response to various forces over time. In our culture, we have local government institutions, corporate institutions, the institutions set up under the Westminster system and so on. During the 16th and 17th centuries and during the time of the American War of Independence, various institutions underwent change and adaptation. Related but slightly different systems developed in the United States of America and England and, as the centuries passed, they changed further and grew further apart.

Nowadays, you could not transplant the Westminster system of government to the USA and say that it would work well. The cultures have diversified. They are different. For the same reason, you cannot take an organisational structure from within an essentially western culture, plonk that down on an Aboriginal culture and believe that it will work immediately or that it will work at all. You have to allow an organisational structure to be shaped by the culture within which it operates so that it can gradually come to reflect the mores of that culture. When that occurs, it can be successful.

Mr McCarthy: That is what we are talking about in relation to new land councils.

Mr EDE: I am not arguing about that, Mr Speaker. I believe that it is a major problem which the land councils have at present. However, the answer will not be found by breaking up the land councils into 40 different pieces, each of which will deal with the same thing. That will not solve the problem.

Mr Speaker, I would like to refer to an event which occurred in my electorate the other day. A meeting took place at Pmara Jutunta, organised by Pastor Eric Pananka, a well-respected person in my electorate. Pastor Eric and a group of other people from throughout the Ammatjirra area met to discuss the formation of a separate land council. Those people are looking at the numbers they have and the areas which are covered. The people at the meeting came from as far west as Wakalba, from Boundary Bore and Mulga Bore to the east, from Stirling to the north and so on. They have started the process of applying to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs for the establishment of their own land council. That is their right under the Land Rights Act and, as the

Leader of the Opposition has said, we should be working on the processes which need to be put in place so that, if that is the ultimate step people wish to take at the end of the day, it can occur smoothly.

One of the major factors which pushes people to take such steps is an inherent contradiction in the Land Rights Act. One of the worst things that can be said about an Aboriginal person in my area, and I believe it is the same in Arnhem Land and elsewhere in the north, is that somebody is speaking out who 'cannot talk for that land'. When it is said of somebody that 'he cannot talk for that country', it is an indication that that person is on very dangerous ground. In Aboriginal culture, the question is whether a person is breaking law to the extent of talking about somebody else's country. The problem inherent in the larger land council structures is that, at general meetings of councils, people are asked to vote on matters relating to land over which they have no jurisdiction under Aboriginal law. People feel shamed by being asked to do that, but they are required to do so by the act. I know that the general pattern in these matters is that they are worked out in the local area by the people with traditional responsibility and that members of the land council are basically asked to rubber-stamp a local agreement. I do not know of any instance in which that is not what has happened.

Mr McCarthy: I do not know what it is like in the south but I can think of some up here.

Mr EDE: I cannot think of one in the Centre. You can talk about the north later.

Despite that, some people are extremely sensitive on this particular point. Again and again, it has been made clear that some people are shamed when they are asked to do that. That is why the opposition amendment sought to enable language groups, if they so wished, to make decisions in local areas and to simply hire expertise from another body in terms of lawyers, anthropologists and so on.

I am not convinced that members opposite are not taking the path of disempowerment. They would have to convince me that they have a genuine intention to give people the same access which they presently have to resources and expertise. The route we proposed in our amendment would allow those groups to make decisions in their own manner about their own land within tribal boundaries, without talking about other people's land, whilst allowing them to have access to resources in whitefellow terms.

We must remember that land councils form a bridge. On the one hand, they have to deal with matters in the context of European society. On the other hand, they must be firmly enmeshed in Aboriginal culture. This is what a successful land council structure must achieve. The Aboriginal people involved must feel that they can work within the land council structure without having to break tribal law or compromise it. On the other hand, the land council has to negotiate with miners, property developers and governments. It has to satisfy its auditors and it has to meet all the requirements which whitefellow society places on a major limited liability company. To do that, it has to have professional expertise. It has to be able to utilise that expertise in such a way that it is still under the control of the traditional owners, control which does not compromise traditional tribal law. That is a major task. It is very difficult to develop an organisational structure which will do that.

We have recognised that it is not possible to simply develop a new structure and to impose that on Aboriginal people. We have to recognise that Aboriginal people themselves are the best judges of how such structures can fit into their culture. We need to provide a framework which allows flexibility so that people can adapt structures according to local needs. Aboriginal people have to determine the balance of power and responsibility which is most appropriate to them. During that process, they must continue to have the ability to call on the expertise and resources they need in order not to be crushed by larger processes. As they gradually take on more powers and functions, they need to be in a position which allows them to protect and maintain control of their land and their sites from the machinations of various outside groups.

The opposition wishes to allow flexibility whilst giving people security in the knowledge that, as they move forward, they will not be ripped off by a government which may be inherently opposed to some of the things that they want. I am not pointing the finger at this stage. I am just saying that various governments may have agendas which run counter to the interests of these people and that they need to be in a position to look after their interests in such situations. Although we have not been able to reach agreement at this stage, I would hope that this will not be the last time something like this comes up. I hope that, if it does, there might be a little more give and take rather than adopting rigid positions because of prepared motions. Members of this side of the House are very keen to come to grips with the problems and to resolve them.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I see an analogy and a great deal of similarity between the present situation in respect of land councils and what is happening in Czechoslovakia. The people's revolution in the communist countries has been gaining momentum. We have seen on television the uprising in Prague. I noted with interest that the communist rulers of Czechoslovakia have suddenly produced a package of reforms for the people. It really is nothing more than an attempt to maintain power. The people are saying that it is too late, that they should have done it a long time ago.

It is the same thing here. Members of the opposition, the representatives of the Northern and Central Land Councils in this place, are saying that they recognise that there is unrest and a need for some autonomy for the people, but they still want to hang on to power. They would let the people decide the small, local issues but, for the broader issues, they must remain under the larger umbrella. I certainly do not support that.

The accusation was made that the government is trying to divide and conquer, that it wants to create so many small councils that none of them would have any power. The Chief Minister pointed out very clearly that it would be up to each independent land council, if it so desired, to join a coalition of land councils. If they wanted to speak with one voice on a particular issue, they could. It would be each individual land council's choice. It would not be foisted on them as the amendment proposed by the opposition would do. That to me is the real rub. There is greater democracy by far in what the government is offering. The other side is simply offering a few sops but, in relation to larger matters, it demands that people remain under the umbrella of the Central and Northern Councils.

It is a great sadness to me that the Central and Northern Land Councils, bodies which were set up to serve the Aboriginal people, have now become the masters. They do not care about the Aboriginal people. If they did, we would not have had such a long running brawl about excisions on pastoral leases. It



is very obvious from the consultations which Gerry Hand is carrying out in relation to pastoral excisions even now, that he is still trying to prop up the land councils, create division and keep Aboriginal people from obtaining land which would lead to a great improvement on their lifestyles.

In my view, the analogy with Czechoslovakia is very appropriate. Realising that their number is up and in a desperate bid to hold power, the communists are offering some sops and reforms. The people are rejecting this. I believe that the Aboriginal people are waking up to the land councils. They do not want them dominating their lives. They recognise that so many of their problems could be better sorted out through community governments cooperating with the government of the Northern Territory. Thank heavens, there are enough examples of that. The Aboriginal people know that and believe that that is the better way to go. I certainly believe it is too.

I fully support the government's motion. I believe that the message that we should send to Canberra is that, if the people so wish - and it should not be forced on them - the land councils should be independent. If they wish to join in with a larger group of land councils for whatever purpose, that is a matter for them. If they think that what the bigger group is proposing is not for them, they should have the option of staying right away. They must be persuaded rather than bullied or forced by legislation. The government's proposition has my full support. I believe it is the most democratic process for the Aboriginal people.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not need to speak for very long because the things that I intended to say have been covered by other speakers. I rise to add my support to the amendments as proposed. Frankly, I do not think it is appropriate for this House to decide that separate independent land councils should be under any umbrella, other than one which they create themselves. The amendments put forward by the Minister for Lands and Housing clarify what may have been for some a contradiction in terms in the previous motion. In the original motion, there was a reference to regional land councils which could have been construed by some as an acceptance by government that regional councils under the Northern Land Council were acceptable across the board. Quite frankly, that is not the case because it has been made very clear to government by senior traditional owners that they are not prepared to wear a situation in which they are likely to be under the control of the existing major land councils.

Any solution at all that places the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory under an umbrella which, as was pointed out by the member for Stuart, often gives the responsibility for decision-making to people who do not have the responsibility to speak for particular areas of land, is not appropriate. It is not acceptable, not only to the traditional owners, but also to others who are forced at times to make such decisions even though the matters may have been decided earlier. Sometimes cases have been worked out in a way which was contrary to factual evidence and, in fact, decisions were taken of which some land council members now feel ashamed.

It is quite likely that some Aboriginal people around the Territory will prefer to remain under the existing land councils. It may well be that, for some time to come, they will feel more comfortable with existing land councils. However, it is ridiculous to say, as both the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Stuart said, that it is impossible under the Land Rights Act for greater responsibility to be given to traditional owners locally. In fact, the Land Rights Act envisaged that the trustees of land

basically had the say and that the land councils would be responsible to them and directed by them.

In fact, it has become the other way around. The land councils have taken the lead. They have hijacked the responsibility of traditional owners. They make decisions for them and often without their advice. I could cite a number of cases. Some of them are not necessarily significant culturally, but they are certainly significant in that people have been excluded from travelling on Aboriginal land by land councils even though the traditional owners wanted those persons to travel there. I could cite the case of Don Dunstan, the former Premier of South Australia, who travelled to a number of communities. Because he was showing some inclination to support community government, he was refused entry into Ngukurr by the land council office in Katherine against the wishes of the people of Ngukurr. That was quite inappropriate. I could cite a number of similar cases where responsibility has been taken away from traditional owners and placed in the hands of people who were supposed to be responsible to traditional owners.

The actions of this government in relation to Aboriginal affairs are sometimes questioned. I guess it is quite appropriate for oppositions and others to question the actions of government, particularly in this very volatile area of Aboriginal affairs. It is one that can gain many brownie points for individuals and for oppositions. In fact, the Northern Territory government's actions in this regard are pure. There is no doubt at all that we are listening to and hearing the voice of traditional owners and responding to those voices. In recent times, I have had more and more senior people coming to see me and expressing the view that, for the first time, they can see light at the end of the tunnel whereby they can think for themselves and do what they have always believed they had the right to do: control their own lives and their own destiny.

Independent or separate land councils will not necessarily mean a blow-out of funding required for Aboriginal land councils. In fact, it should bring about quite the contrary result, as it did in the case of the Tiwi Land Council. It can be argued that the Tiwi Land Council is a unique case. The people are very closely related and there are very clearly delineated boundaries. They all know where their areas of responsibility lie. What members opposite have lost sight of is that Aboriginal people right throughout the Territory know their boundaries. They know where their area of responsibility lies. Occasionally, there will be conflict for a number of reasons. Often, there is dispute over whether the responsibility has been given to one person or another. In fact, they know where their boundaries lie.

With smaller, separate, independent land councils based on community interests or responsibilities, the people within those boundaries will know where their responsibilities lie. There will not be as much disputation as there can be when a large number of people are inappropriately making decisions on behalf of other people. I doubt very much that there will be a need for a major bureaucracy in any one of whatever number of land councils are formed in the future. There should not be a need for large bureaucracies. However, as has been pointed out by other members, there is the capacity for separate land councils to form their own umbrella organisation in much the same way as local government has done with the local government association or community government with the community government association - bodies which are representative of a group of councils and can speak on behalf of those councils.

Smaller land councils would not necessarily employ large numbers of lawyers and anthropologists. Perhaps they would have the capacity to obtain that expertise from the private sector if and when it was required. They are not going to require it as often as the current land councils. Quite clearly, the existing large councils will not have that capacity in the future. It is obvious that the blow-out in their budget during the last year or 2 means that they will be unable in future to employ the human resources which they have employed in the past. They will probably have to use the private sector instead of employing large numbers of people in their bureaucracies, people who are basically looking for a fight in many instances.

I can understand the paranoia of the larger land councils regarding the handing over of what they now have in respect of responsibility for traditional owners and traditional trustees of land in the Northern Territory. I guess I can see something in what the member for Sadadeen said in that it could be likened, in some ways, to what is happening in the USSR and eastern Europe. It is as inevitable as that. Here we see people who have been held in and have had responsibility taken away from them for so long and are now demanding that responsibility back. They are demanding control of their own lives and destiny. I think that is appropriate and reasonable.

I can also understand the stance of the honourable members opposite. Clearly, they and their federal counterparts have been told to toe the line in this regard. It is quite obvious to me that Senator Bob Collins, and even Warren Snowdon for that matter, aspire to the frontbench in Canberra, and they have been told to toe the line or stay in the wilderness. It is quite clear that that is the case. I can understand the paranoia. Equally obviously, the member for Arnhem has been told at Ngukurr that, if he does not accept the separate land council movement, he will face opposition at the next election. Under those circumstances, there is a good chance that he would lose his job. I can understand the paranoia.

However, that is just not good enough for the people of south-east Arnhem, Daly River, Peppimenarti or central Australia who are demanding a much greater say in what is happening on their land, and what is happening with their cultural rights and responsibilities. They know that they have responsibilities which are often usurped by other people. Quite clearly, at present, they are usurped by the bureaucracy of the Northern Land Council. Had the Northern Land Council, in particular, been a little more honest earlier, had it allowed traditional owners to have a little more say, and had it not tried to interfere with the just desires of those people so often, I doubt very much that there would be this move for separate land councils. The Northern Land Council cannot blame this government or the people of south-east Arnhem Land. It has only itself to blame. For too long, it has taken away the responsibilities of other people. It has countermanded the desires of the people in these places and now it wonders why it is losing control. It is losing control because it does not deserve control. It has not allowed traditional owners to speak for themselves.

I find it hard to understand how the member for MacDonnell can claim to be in a position where he can decide that the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory are happy to remain under the umbrella of the Northern or Central Land Councils. Quite clearly, they are not. They still have that capacity. Even this amended motion does not say that they must go out and form independent land councils. It says quite clearly that there should be scope for new land councils and that they should be totally independent. But, as I have mentioned previously, it does not prevent any group of people remaining under the wing of the existing land councils. They can do that quite freely.

If they are given some autonomy, which can be done under the present act - in fact, they are entitled to it under the present act - then there will not be a problem. The present act might not allow for regional land councils as such under the umbrella of the present 2 land councils, but it does allow for and require that the present land councils listen to and adhere to the desires of traditional owners, and that is simply not happening. The member for MacDonnell tried valiantly to defend the point of view of the present land councils and in doing so automatically defended the point of view of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, but I think he has failed in his attempt.

There is no doubt at all that the Northern Land Council has blown out its budget to the extent of \$1.6m even after the very large sums of money that have been granted to it from ABTA funds. Many millions of dollars have been granted but it has still over-expended by \$1.6m. Regardless of what John Ah Kit or Galarrwuy Yunupingu say about what the real level of debt is, it will come out in time. There is no doubt about that. I say that with no doubt whatsoever because I know it to be true. It will be seen that the real level of debt is \$1.6m at the very minimum. Although the land council officials are struggling valiantly, no amount of arguing now will prevent that fact coming to light in the near future.

There has been an attempt to muddy the waters in terms of what these amendments do or do not do. Certainly, they do not prevent some areas of the Territory remaining under the control and umbrella of the present land councils. However, they do provide for wider options to be made available without browbeating from the existing land councils. They should provide a clear message, particularly if supported by members of the opposition, to the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs that the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory not only want but demand the right to make their own decisions for their culture and their land.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to the amendments this afternoon, having spoken to the motion during the last sittings, and I shall be very brief. Having heard the comments of members of the opposition, my concern is that, despite the misgivings of the Aboriginal community about the present system, they seem determined and committed to persist with it for reasons that are very hard to understand.

The Aborigines whom I come across in the remote areas of the Territory have a basic desire to take control of, speak for and represent their own land interests in their own way. Very clearly, the provisions of the Land Rights Act and the 2 major land councils, the Central and Northern Land Councils, are denying Aborigines that opportunity. It was very refreshing to hear a recent radio interview during which Justice Woodward was asked about how he thought the Land Rights Act was operating. He said that he recommended the establishment of 2 land councils in his report, which I think dates back as far as 1973, because he did not know at the time of any other way in which the administration of Aboriginal land could be undertaken. He accepted that there would have to be changes in the course of time, probably demanded by Aborigines, but certainly changes that took account of Aboriginal wishes. That is exactly where we are now.

It can be argued that the existing system should be retained simply because it is what we have, what some people believe is good and what ought to be maintained in the interests of the land councils themselves. Such arguments should be put aside so that the wishes of the people prevail. Many speakers this afternoon have reflected on this point, and I reiterate it. What the Aboriginal communities in the remote areas want is to start to have a

say, control, influence and determination over their own land and, subsequently, their own lives and lifestyle. It is incumbent on us all to ensure that this opportunity is available to the Aboriginal community.

In closing, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to reiterate a point which I have made on many occasions. The very great difficulty that faces the government of the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth government in administering land in remote areas is exactly the same for the Aboriginal community as it is for the Minister for Lands and Housing in the Northern Territory government. The tyranny of distance, the lack of interest on the part of people thousands of kilometres away and bureaucrats' lack of understanding of people who have their own concerns to take account of, make it imperative that people are able, in their own communities, to make decisions about their own land for themselves. If those people wish to be represented by a large land council, a company, a trust, a small land council or, in fact, by one person, that is a matter for them and, as legislators, we should do what we can to ensure that that opportunity is available to them so that they can be happy with their lot.

I think one of the great acts of arrogance and patronage of the Australian people is that, having given land to Aboriginal people, we now behave as if we can tell them forever how they are to administer it. If we do not grow out of that very shortly, they will start to become more vocal than they have already been in order to get what they rightly deserve. I say good luck to those Aborigines in remote areas who want to have their own land councils and look after themselves because that is what development of the Northern Territory is all about.

Mr VALE (Tourism): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak briefly in support of the amendments. I have spent well over 25 years in central Australia and, particularly in the early days, a greater percentage of that time was spent with Aboriginal communities, either working with them in the Palm Valley and Mereenie districts or playing with them in sport. I would hasten to say that I am no expert. Indeed, I do not think there is any such thing as an expert on Aboriginal affairs. I know a person in central Australia who has spent his lifetime working with Aboriginal people and he says that he is still gradually getting to understand the Aboriginal lifestyle.

Aborigines in central Australia refer to politicians as 'urrepe-urrepe', or whirlwinds. They say in general terms, and light-heartedly, that politicians whistle into a community, introduce themselves, shake hands and whistle out again without really sitting down to listen. That is a pretty accurate description because, in 1976, when the Aboriginal Land Rights Bill was tabled in the federal parliament, the then federal minister, Hon Ian Viner, said that it would lie on the Table for a number of months so that Aboriginal groups and others could discuss it and communicate their thoughts and comments back to him.

As a result, the Finke River Mission obtained a copy of the bill and worked for months across central Australia. They talked to literally dozens of family or clan groups, explaining and interpreting the legislation to people and faithfully tape-recording their comments. I have a copy of the resulting documents which were ultimately forwarded to Canberra. I have read them and most are certainly repetitious. However, community after community and family after family, said: 'This legislation does not recognise Aboriginal law. It does not recognise our traditional ownership of land. You cannot have more than 2 people speaking for our land. We are talking about

individual groups. If they do, it is punishable by death'. To those people, the Central Land Council was a European concept with control over land being exercised by delegates attending meetings. One after another, these groups told to Mr Viner and others at the federal level that it would not work. If anyone here tonight thinks that that comment is inaccurate, I have a copy of the documents in my office in central Australia and I am more than willing to let anyone look at them. I kept them because, ultimately, I think they will become as valuable, if not more valuable, than the Strehlow Collection.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will tell you something else that came out of those documents recording comments from Aboriginal people in central Australia, as well as from conversations that I have had with those people in recent years, and this is interesting if it is considered in the context of the proposed flood mitigation dam in Alice Springs. Group after group said that there is no such thing as women's sacred sites. I add that information for the general knowledge of honourable members.

The movement to break away from the major land councils has not occurred because of lack of administration but because they did not recognise the tribal rights of people. The break away movement has been occurring for years in central Australia and is now reaching a speed which will ultimately cause civil war to break out there. I mean 'civil' in a break away sense. One community will follow another in an attempt to break away from the European concept of land councils and form their own clan or family councils to control their own areas. That will happen sooner rather than later, given that people have waited for 15 years to break away from the European-type organisation. This motion and the amendments are all about freedom of choice. The government does not wish to enforce its will on any community in central Australia or, indeed, the Northern Territory. It simply wishes to allow those people who have suffered in silence for many years to finally exercise their own choice. Mr Speaker, I support both the motion and the amendments.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the Chief Minister's motion and the amendments moved by the Minister for Lands and Housing. I would like to begin by commenting on the remarks made by the member for Stuart who said that the establishment of these separate independent land councils would lead to people running off in their own directions and that, in that process, they would have no power. What he really meant, of course, was that the ALP would have far less power to manipulate people. That is what the ALP has been doing for the last 15 years, politicising and manipulating.

Aboriginal people have been fairly much under the direction of the Northern and Central Land Councils. We know that those 2 land councils are heavily politicised in one direction - the left. If new councils are established, the ALP will have far less opportunity to exercise control. Members opposite know that. Whilst some of them stand up there and say that some people think the trend to new councils is good and others think it is bad, they realise that it will make the ALP's situation even more difficult.

We have heard members of the opposition tell us what a great role the Northern and Central Land Councils have played over the last 10 or 15 years, how good they have been for Aboriginal people and how ably they have represented them. It is very interesting, in the context of all this talk about Aboriginal self-determination, to remember that the Northern Land Council and the Central Land Council were set up by white fellows, not Aborigines. I would suggest that there was almost no Aboriginal input into the concept of those 2 land councils.

We have heard how Justice Woodward was interviewed recently and asked about his opinions on the operations of the land councils which were established as a result of his recommendations. I think the member for Barkly referred to that. Whilst the concept may have appeared to be superficially fine in the view of white people, the reality was that it took away the right of traditional owners to be spokespeople in their own communities. It set up 2 huge, burgeoning bureaucracies headed in some cases by what traditional Aboriginal people refer to as 'yellow fellows'. It is clear, when one talks to traditional Aboriginal people in the bush, that they do not consider many of the people involved in the administration of the land council bureaucracies to be Aboriginal people at all.

I am very pleased to note that the Tiwi people very quickly woke up to what was going on in the Northern Land Council and, many years ago, broke away and formed their own land council. We have heard from a number of speakers about how successful the Tiwi Land Council has been. It does not have a huge bureaucracy. I have been to its office and the number of people employed there could be counted on one hand. I saw only one non-Aboriginal person there, filling the role of bookkeeper and administrator.

The history of the Northern and Central Land Councils has been very sad indeed. It is a history of maladministration, interference and political manipulation and, in more recent times, of massive budget blow-outs. We heard a moment ago of how, in recent times, the Northern Land Council's budget blow-out has reached \$1.6m. About 6 or 8 months ago, I know that the NLC was employing about 120 persons. That is unbelievable. That represented a dramatic increase on the number it employed only 12 or 18 months ago, which was about 80. What those 120 people do is beyond my comprehension. The land council wonders why its budget has blown out by \$1.6m. Does it think that there is a bottomless well? Does it think that it can just go to the federal government and receive handout after handout? After all, the money is coming from the Australian taxpayer. I think a member of the opposition said earlier: 'Yes, but the Auditor-General audits the books'. I am sure that the Auditor-General has quite a nightmare in auditing the books.

The thing that has disappointed me most about this whole business and the way the land councils have been administered in the last decade or so has been the way that they have been politicised, mainly through infiltration by left-wing trendies. There is a whole raft of them in both the Northern and Central Land Councils. I agonise when I read the Sunday Territorian each week. I read Galarrwuy Yunupingu's column and I say to myself: 'Here we go. Another poor fellow me column'. All he does is lambast the Northern Territory government, time after time. He never has a good word for it and I know - or at least I strongly suspect - that Mr Yunupingu never writes a word of that column. He probably never reads it. It is written on his behalf by other people within the Northern Land Council who have a political agenda. They write that column to suit their own political ends and, regrettably for Mr Yunupingu, his name is attached to it.

As a result of that, we have seen a dramatic decline in Mr Yunupingu's credibility and status in the community at large. Some years ago, he was perceived to be one of the people at the leading edge of Aboriginal self-development. Where is he today, Mr Speaker? I am afraid that his image has declined enormously. He might ask himself why. It is because of his involvement in political issues. If he was truly representing the best interests of his people, he would still be highly respected. Regrettably, that is not the case. He has gone down and down and down.

I am very pleased to see that the member for Arnhem has returned to the House because I would like to hear what he has to say as a traditional Aboriginal person. I would like to hear from him and from the member for Arafura, who is also a traditional Aboriginal person, in relation to this issue. We have not heard either of them speak in this debate. I think they should speak because they are the only 2 Aboriginal people in this place and they should be able to represent the real interests of traditional Aboriginal people. I would be very pleased to listen to their contributions a little later.

Whilst white fellows established the Central and Northern Land Councils on what they considered to be a suitable role model, it took no cognisance of the traditional clan groupings, traditional skin groups or language groupings of Aboriginal people. They are all different. They have different aspirations and different problems. But we have brought them all together into these 2 very large land councils and the persons who are elected to those councils are not necessarily the traditional owners whose right it is to represent their people. Generally speaking, it is other people who are represented on those land councils. The existing land councils have not taken cognisance of those clan groupings, and that is what these various break away land councils will indeed do. They will represent those clans.

Earlier during the year, as a member of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development, I visited about 50 Aboriginal communities around the northern, central and the southern regions of the Northern Territory and spoke to hundreds, if not thousands, of Aboriginal people over a period of 3 or 4 months or more. I can confirm that a large number of people said to me, as they did to my colleagues, that their greatest problem was dealing with the Northern and or Central Land Council, depending on where they were located. They had a very poor relationship in almost every instance. I can recall a meeting at Mataranka at which a man who is now one of the leaders of the break away land council movement in south-east Arnhem Land was present. He really gave us a serve about the Northern Land Council.

I was at Hermannsburg and a chap there was really up in arms about the activities of the Central Land Council. We also visited Docker River. I noted that, in the NT News of 20 November, there is a headline which says: 'Traditional Owners to Quit CLC'. The article refers to people from that Docker River community. There is a long history of traditional Aboriginal people in various communities becoming quite disillusioned with the activities of both major land councils. They know that they have been manipulated. They know that those land councils have been politicised and are working in the interests of people other than traditional people. The councils are caught up in this political agenda. The people pulling the strings are the likes of the federal minister, Mr Hand, and his fellow traveller, Mr Snowden. They are sitting in Canberra pulling the strings. That is to their disgrace.

It is very important that members of this Assembly support these traditional Aboriginal people in their aspirations and in their moves to establish separate land councils. Like my colleague who spoke earlier, I predict that, in 5 years or so, we will not have 3 or 4 separate and independent land councils but probably a dozen. Once 2 or 3 such councils are established and seen to be successful, making their own decisions on the ground in their own areas without huge bureaucracies of so-called advisers trying to call the shots and be part of the action, others will follow. They want to be like the Tiwi Land Council which makes its own decisions among its own people. I predict that, given another 5 years or so, we will see increased activity in terms of the establishment of separate land councils.



In closing, I support the amendments to the motion, as I support the comments of the Chief Minister and other colleagues who have spoken in this debate. It is a move in the right direction and I believe that those traditional Aboriginals who are behind these separate land council movements will be very heartened by the moral support that they will receive from this Northern Territory government.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I am relieved to note that the Chief Minister has now taken my advice in relation to the debate that we had on this issue during the last sittings. I indicated to him then that there seemed to be a conflict between himself and the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government in relation to the wording of the Chief Minister's motion in that the minister argued that there should be several separate land councils, whereas the Chief Minister said that regional land councils should be set up under the Northern Territory. I am pleased that they have taken some advice from me.

In rising to speak to the amendments to the original motion moved by the Chief Minister, I can say that my personal experience - and I take a lot of time to discuss matters of mutual concern with the land councils, especially in my area - is that there is no doubt that both the Central Land Council and the Northern Land Council would accept and support regional land councils. However, they would have to be set up in a manner which would satisfactorily achieve the aims and the aspirations of people in a given area. About a week and a half ago, I was at Roper River speaking to my constituents specifically in relation to this matter. I indicated to the people there that, whilst there may be 80% or 90% support for the break away land council, 20% of the population on that community is very determined not to break away from the existing council. I make that very clear.

The existing land councils have their charter and obligations under the Land Rights Act. They must represent the views of the traditional Aboriginal people of a given area. That is their sole responsibility. It is their role to act as agents in matters such as mining, land use or whatever. Given the time for which they have operated, the land councils have done a very remarkable job. It was necessary to set up bureaucracies with anthropologists, lawyers expert in constitutional law and disputes, and other experts in a whole range of areas so that the land councils could meet the responsibilities thrust on them in terms of representing Aboriginal people throughout the Northern Territory, especially the tribal Aboriginal people to whom the member for Jingili referred. Those traditional people do not have the legal expertise, the know-how and the technology to consult with big mining companies such as BHP, Pancontinental, Noranda and Nabalco. In order to do that, they had to have access to the infrastructure set up within the land councils.

During that process, I am sure that people have learned much and are still learning. The land councils have made their mistakes and I am sure that they will rectify them when the time comes. As I said earlier, it was necessary to employ a range of people because the Land Rights Act specifically states that the land councils are to act as the agents of the traditional landowners in given areas in order to ensure that their needs are satisfied, to consider the available monetary benefits from proposed ventures, and to represent and look after their interests. That is an important fact, and I think that the NLC and CLC have carried out that job remarkably well in very stressful times and through financial difficulties. That has been especially so because, every time there seems to be a hiccup in relation to Aboriginal land, this government goes against the NLC and the CLC.

Throughout a long period, the Northern Territory government has appealed against decisions made by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner. It has made representations in the High Court in respect of land claims. Only in relation to very small areas of land has this government actually supported the wishes of Aboriginal people. That is one of the reasons why the NLC had to engage expert people in certain areas to ensure that its side was heard in the Supreme Court and almost every other level of the court system in Australia. The NLC has a responsibility to ensure that the wishes of its clients are protected in the same way that this Northern Territory government protects its interests. I am sure that the honourable members opposite would not be satisfied if their wishes and the wishes of the people in the Territory were not represented well. I am sure that they would feel disgraced if they did not represent those wishes, and that is what the NLC has done in giving advice, and taking matters of concern to Aboriginal people to various groups in Australia.

I was not in the Chamber to hear what the member for Jingili said about yellow fellows. I believe he referred to people in the Northern Territory. I come from a remote area with a traditional background, and I can assure the member for Jingili and yourself, Mr Speaker, that if it were not for the support of people like Charlie Perkins and Gary Foley, people in the remote communities would be still in a very difficult position to grasp the benefits of 20th century technology which we are starting to gain now. From my point of view, the remark made by the member for Jingili was very offensive and I would suggest that he should withdraw it.

Mr Ede: A very racist comment.

Mr LANHUPUY: I am sure that it was offensive to 25% of the population of the Northern Territory who, I am sure, will hear about the words of the member for Jingili during the coming election campaign.

Mr Speaker, people like Johnny Ah Kit, John Christopherson, and Josie Crawshaw - people I have known all my life - have fought to be recognised within government departments and to ensure that governments like the one to which the member for Jingili belongs accept the fact that, if we are to make the Territory work politically or otherwise, classifications of people such as that used by the member for Jingili should not be used because all they create is racism and hatred.

Mr Setter: What I was saying was what traditional Aboriginal people were saying to me!

Mr LANHUPUY: I am offended, Mr Speaker, by the member for Jingili. I honestly am. It is a sad day when a member of this House says something like that during debate in this Chamber. He should withdraw that remark. I am sure that people in the electorate of Jingili will hear about this because I am very offended by the remarks of the member for Jingili.

As I was saying earlier, I support the people's need to break away from major land councils on the basis that the legislative requirements set out under the Lands Rights Act are met without these people opposite sticking their bums in. It is an evolutionary process that my people have to go through - the whole process of coming to grips with legislation, with having to deal with the Mining Act, the Land Rights Act, the Traffic Act and so on. All these people opposite are doing is torpedoing a decision that we hoped could have been made with all the assistance and know-how available. That decision relates to the terms of the Land Rights Act, legislation which many people are still coming to grips with.

As I said earlier, I personally support any move for the setting up of regional land councils. However, it has to go through the due process of law. It is not fair for the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government to be saying that he has had groups of people talking to him about the break away land council and even seeking advice on funding. If we have land councils scattered throughout the Northern Territory, the Northern Territory government will have enormous headaches in dealing with them every time it wants to build a pipeline or road. Imagine the administrative nightmare that will result within the Department of Mines and Energy, the Conservation Commission, the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries and the Department of Transport and Works. It will create an administrative nightmare for the ministers concerned.

Mr Finch: It will make it much easier.

A member interjecting.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, he is the one who will have the headache. From Bulman to Nhulunbuy, you have about 8 groups of people to consult specifically about where to put culverts, where to cross roads or how to realign the roads.

Mr Manzie: They have to be consulted anyway.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, he knows that there are legislative measures that have to be taken into account. There are markings. There is the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act to be looked at.

Mr Manzie: That is right. They have to be spoken to. They all agree and the NLC disagrees.

Mr LANHUPUY: How many departments will that involve? It will involve the Sacred Sites Protection Authority. It will involve Transport and Works and a whole range of departments.

Mr Manzie: It involves them now.

Mr LANHUPUY: Just imagine if one of those groups of people says no.

Mr Manzie: It is their prerogative. They all say yes and the NLC says no. That is the problem.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, what if they said no? Many people will say no to many projects in the Northern Territory. Is this mob going to blame the NLC after these break away land councils have established themselves?

That is a problem that the Territory government will have. I am expressing a message of concern to members opposite because I can see it happening. Of course, it will be to their advantage politically to be able to divide Aboriginal people and have smaller land councils throughout the Northern Territory. It will be to their advantage to be able to manipulate people on the ground.

I support groups who want to set up their own land councils if it is done under the due process of law. As legislators, we have an obligation to ensure that the legislation is followed, no matter whether we are Labor or CLP. I do not want to see these people opposite thrusting separate land councils on Aboriginal people for their own reasons. The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government might say that he wants to give

Aboriginal people the sorts of powers he has given them under the Local Government Act. That may be the case, but there are still screens and tests. The feeling in the communities is that, as long as the Land Rights Act remains with the federal government, they have a much better chance of surviving. Of course, I will probably be sorry if the federal Labor government loses, whether that be at the next election or whenever. When we know that that mob over there, Mr Speaker, supports ...

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will refer to the honourable members opposite as honourable members.

Mr LANHUPUY: As we know, the honourable members on the other side of this House support the principles of the Peacock federal opposition which is determined to wipe out the land councils and cut Aboriginal people's funds by \$100m. It has taken us so much time to reach the point we have now reached in terms of self-determination. I would like to hear what members opposite will do about the federal opposition's policy in respect of Aboriginal people. I am amazed that none of them has touched on it. Nevertheless, they talk about self-determination and autonomy in the communities. Once the federal opposition gets into power, we will be the first ones to be hit hard. The honourable members opposite should be embarrassed at the policy of the federal opposition. That will be a very sad day.

That is the attitude that this government has. It supports Mr Peacock and his decision to cut our legs from under us by cutting \$100m or more. That is after the enormous work that has been done by the departments and the ADC, as well as on ATSIC. It has been a long and a tedious process for the Aboriginal people in Australia. What we have now is the CLP government in the Northern Territory supporting a federal policy that will put us back about 200 years. We on this side of the House are aware of the fact that Aboriginal people have been waiting for 200 years and I said that in the excisions debate.

I support the decisions in the communities in relation to land councils, but all I am saying is that it must be done under due process of law. It is a matter for determination by the minister and it is a matter for those people to decide. Honourable members opposite are sticking their bibles in and thrusting their views on the people to ensure that the land councils are established at a quicker rate than expected. They ought to be ashamed of themselves.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr SETTER (Jingili)(by leave): Mr Speaker, my comments in this debate have been misinterpreted and misquoted by the member for Arnhem. In relation to the term 'yellow fellows' which I used, I would like to explain that that was a terminology which was quoted me by a number of traditional owners in reference to some of the people involved with the land councils. It is not a terminology that I would use myself and I thought it very important to explain that. It was a terminology used by traditional Aboriginal people to describe some people who work for the land councils. It is not a terminology that I myself would choose to use.

Amendments agreed to.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I will not be very long in closing debate on the motion. However, I would like to respond to some things which have been said this afternoon. If the member for Arnhem wants to see wasted money, he should just wait to see whether ATSIC is able to run for a

few years and what it does with the billion-odd dollars it is likely to get its hands on. He argued that we would be hit pretty hard if the federal opposition parties came to power at the next election. What does he think of the 22% or 24% funding cut in real terms which the Northern Territory has suffered during the last 4 years? What does he think that is? In 1 year alone, 1987-88, we were cut by \$100m. The \$100m cut to Aboriginal funding which Peacock is talking about will be spread across the nation, not only the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, the member for Arnhem also argued that, if the federal coalition parties win government at the next federal election - which, I am pleased to say, is likely - they will wipe out land rights. I do not believe that they will. It certainly is not their policy.

Mr Lanhupuy interjecting.

Mr PERRON: Their policy is that land rights is a matter for the states. We have always argued that land administration is a matter for the states and the Northern Territory. Legislation such as the Aboriginal Land Rights Act should come within the jurisdiction of this parliament, not the federal parliament. Hopefully, we will all see the day when that occurs.

In terms of the motion itself, it is quite clear that the real differences between the government and the opposition relate more to mechanics than principle. Just about every person who has spoken in this debate on the amendments has spoken in support of more land councils and additional authority to traditional owners to control their own affairs. The opposition argued that our motion would lock Aborigines into some particular structure and we are saying that the opposition's amendment would lock them into a particular structure. We clearly disagree on those matters, but we are talking about mechanics. As far as principles are concerned, we seem to agree.

The motion before the House calls for acknowledgement that there is a movement towards separate land councils. It calls for some action to facilitate the expression of the wishes of Aboriginal people who want to move in that direction, and it calls on various parties, namely the federal government and the land councils in the Territory, not to get in the way. Indeed, it calls on them to do whatever they can to facilitate this movement. That is what the motion is all about. That is what I think most people in this House seem to support as a matter of principle. On the basis of that principle, I ask all honourable members to support the motion.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

#### MOTION

Sessional Committee on Use of Alcohol by the Community

Continued from 18 October 1989.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move:

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

During the present session of the Assembly -

- (1) a committee to be known as the Sessional Committee on Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community, consisting of 5 members of

- the Assembly, be appointed, and that members be appointed to the committee by subsequent resolution;
- (2) The committee be empowered, unless otherwise ordered, to inquire into and from time to time report on:
- (a) current trends in alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory and, as far as possible, differences in consumption patterns based on regions, age, sex, other demographic characteristics and ethnic factors;
  - (b) the social and economic consequences of current patterns of alcohol consumption with special reference to the well-being of individuals and communities and to the demands placed upon government and non-government services;
  - (c) the services currently available within the Northern Territory by both government and non-government agencies to deal with issues directly or indirectly related to alcohol consumption;
  - (d) factors which directly affect the level and nature of alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory community or parts of that community, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing:
    - (i) the accessibility/availability of alcohol within communities including the number of outlets, nature of licences and proximity of geographic location;
    - (ii) the demographic, ethnic and industry structure of the Northern Territory; and
    - (iii) the correlation between socioeconomic conditions and alcohol consumption; and
  - (e) appropriate policies and services for the prevention and treatment of alcohol problems in the Northern Territory;
- (3) the committee be empowered to send for persons, papers and records, to sit in public or in private session notwithstanding any adjournment of the Assembly, to adjourn from place to place and have leave to report from time to time its proceedings and the evidence taken and make such interim recommendations as it may deem fit, and to publish information pertaining to its activities from time to time: the committee shall make an annual report to the Assembly of its activities;
- (4) the committee be empowered to publish from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it and, unless otherwise ordered by the committee, a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public; and
- (5) the foregoing provisions of the resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

Mr Speaker, in speaking very briefly to the amendment, I would like to acknowledge the bipartisan approach to this matter and the cooperation of the member for MacDonnell. The Minister for Health and Community Services, who has carriage of this matter, will elaborate on the terms of the amendment to the member for MacDonnell's motion.

I have had a number of preliminary discussions with some Aboriginal communities in the Alice Springs area. The work of the sessional committee, of course, will relate to the broad Territory community and not simply Aboriginal communities. It will consider the situation of various age groups and address the broadest possible range of problems of concern to the community generally. I fully support the terms of reference as set out in the amendment and look forward to the meaningful deliberations of the committee and the results which will doubtless flow from that.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, when I spoke in the debate on the member for MacDonnell's motion during the last sittings, I stated that the government supported the concept of setting up some sort of committee with the aim of undertaking a complete and comprehensive consideration of alcohol-related issues. We had some concerns about the nature of the terms of reference proposed by the member for MacDonnell and indicated that it was our intention to review the terms of reference to ensure that a fully considered and balanced approach would be taken by the sessional committee.

I do not need to remind honourable members that alcohol abuse is a major social problem in the Northern Territory. It is a matter that has absorbed many hours of debate in this House and in the community at large. Any debate on the subject inevitably raises a considerable amount of emotion, and many inquiries have been conducted. People tend to become very frustrated when they see inquiry after inquiry occurring and I certainly hope that this committee will develop the work that has been done by many groups and organisations across the Northern Territory, to produce appropriate recommendations for action by this parliament.

In putting together these terms of reference, we sought to cast the net wide and to ensure that there would be no artificial limitations on the ability of the committee to properly carry out its functions. To that end, we have proposed that it be a sessional committee rather than a select committee and that it have an ongoing role which would extend beyond conducting a one-off review. The committee will be empowered to report to this Assembly from time to time and on an annual basis.

I turn now to the proposed terms of reference. It is proposed that the committee will be comprised of 5 members. As is usual practice, it would be anticipated that there be 3 members nominated by the government and 2 by the opposition. The committee will be empowered, unless otherwise ordered, to inquire into and from time to time report in respect of a whole range of matters. In other words, before the committee starts to make recommendations, it is to look at the current situation in terms of trends in alcohol consumption and the various factors influencing them. For example, is alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory affected by peculiarities in its demographic structure, its regional breakdown and the industry structure? Are such things significant factors leading to the identified high per capita consumption of alcohol? For example, what is the impact of the large numbers of people who work in the mining and construction sectors, whose work forces tend to have higher levels of alcohol consumption than those which apply more generally?

The committee has the option to consider such matters so that it can come to grips with the reality of the situation. Once the issues are fully understood, the committee will be in a position to make recommendations about the targeting of particular programs. It also provides the opportunity for the committee to look at the social and economic consequences of the current patterns of alcohol consumption. We are not only asking it to look at drinking patterns in various sections of the community but to investigate the consequences of that by drawing on previous research and other information that the committee may wish to consider. As well as looking at what that means in terms of the well-being of individuals and the community, the committee is to look at the consequences in the context of demands on government and non-government services. We have heard much talk about road accidents, health and medical costs, lost time in industry, and a whole range of issues. This committee has the opportunity to examine all those matters and to put forward some considered views.

Paragraph 2(c) provides the opportunity for the committee to look at the currently available services in the Northern Territory, provided by both government and non-government agencies, and to bring together the range of services offered by federal, Northern Territory and local governments and the many community and non-government organisations whose work relates directly or indirectly to alcohol consumption. When making recommendations, the committee will then be working from the basis of what we have today.

The committee will examine factors which directly affect the level and nature of alcohol consumption in the Territory community or parts of the community, including issues such as the accessibility or availability of alcohol within communities, the number of outlets, the nature of licences and the proximity of geographic locations. We have had many debates about the number of liquor outlets, trading hours and the nature of licences. Debate seems to occur perpetually about those subjects.

We hear arguments about whether roadhouses should have takeaway licences or not. There is also the matter of restricted areas. There was the dispute in relation to Curtin Springs and whether the opening or closing of a roadhouse there would influence alcohol consumption in communities some hundreds of kilometres away. The terms of reference of the committee will allow honest examination of the pros and cons of such matters.

The committee will look at the demographic, ethnic and industry structure in the Northern Territory. Do such factors affect the levels of alcohol consumption? It will also examine whether socioeconomic conditions have a direct influence on the level of alcohol consumption and whether that is a factor that should be considered in respect of the Northern Territory. This parliamentary committee will have a broad opportunity to come to terms with a major social issue in the Northern Territory.

The committee will examine appropriate policies for the prevention and treatment of alcohol problems in the Northern Territory. The opportunity exists to go beyond looking at the problem and to suggest solutions. The remaining terms of reference provide the normal powers and procedures to enable the committee to carry out its functions.

The committee's task will not be easy. If its members are serious about addressing the matter of alcohol use and abuse in the Northern Territory, they will need to devote time and effort to the task. It will not be a 5-minute gathering at each sittings. Addressing the issues will require hard work and some administrative support will be required. I know that every budget in the



government faces restrictions. I can advise that the Drug and Alcohol Bureau within the Department of Health and Community Services will be available, within reason, to provide support and to assist with research and data collection which may be required by the committee in order to properly carry out its task. This has been discussed within the department and the bureau itself, and the staff look forward to being able to assist this committee in its very important task. I commend this committee to honourable members and I look forward to some practical and positive results arising from its deliberations.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the motion. I must begin by congratulating the member for MacDonnell who gave birth to this idea and has followed it through to the stage where we have this motion before us. Quite clearly, the member for MacDonnell has identified a key area of concern in the Northern Territory. It is an issue that he has spoken about on a number of occasions in this parliament. Obviously, he feels quite deeply about it as do other members of this parliament. Members such as the members for MacDonnell, Stuart, Arnhem and Arafura have quite vivid first-hand experience of the damage which excessive alcohol consumption can do to their constituents. We are all aware of constituents to whom alcohol is a poison and has done enormous damage. However, it is fair to say that, in particular areas of the Territory, there seem to be greater problems than in other areas.

It is hoped that this committee can go about its task in a constructive way, that the goodwill that has been shown in its establishment will be continued and that it will do its job in a bipartisan fashion. There is no doubt that there is enormous potential for an overall examination of the use and abuse of alcohol in the Northern Territory. With those few words, the opposition supports the initiative prepared by my honourable colleague and supported by the government.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

#### MOTION

#### Appointments to Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I move that the member for Karama, the member for Araluen, the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission, the member for Arnhem and the member for MacDonnell be nominated as members of the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community.

Motion agreed to.

#### STOCK DISEASES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 233)

Continued from 19 October 1989.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, we have circulated an amendment to the bill, which we are proposing to move in the committee stage. There are some commendable elements in the bill. For example, proposed new section 34B would give the court the power to ensure that acquisition occurs on just terms. It says:

In any case where the Supreme Court is of the opinion that the application of any of the provisions of this part would, but for this section, result in an acquisition of property otherwise than on just terms, the Supreme Court may determine such compensation or make such order as, in its opinion, is necessary to ensure that the acquisition is on just terms.

The proposed new section refers to proposed new part VA which is introduced in this bill and is headed 'Disease Control Program'. In effect, it removes a very substantial element of doubt as to whether just terms was the ruling principle in relation to compensation under that part of the legislation. However, it refers only to part VA. It does not mean that the provision for just terms would apply to the balance of the legislation, any more than it did prior to the introduction of this amendment bill.

In terms of what is covered and what is not covered, honourable members would note that part VA talks about the powers of a chief inspector under a declared program.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Where is that?

Mr EDE: It is in proposed new section 29. Proposed new section 29 sets out the powers of a chief inspector and states that, in addition to his other powers, he may order the person in charge of stock to test, to erect, to move, or destroy stock. If the chief inspector issues an order the result of which is that stock is destroyed, compensation has to be paid. If the matter of compensation goes to court, the level of compensation to be paid will be decided on just terms. Let us now look outside proposed part VA. Section 42 of the principal act is contained in part V. Clause 5 of the bill seeks to amend section 42, Powers of an Inspector.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What page?

Mr EDE: It is also on page 6. Clause 5 amends section 42(1) of the principal act by omitting from paragraph (a) 'for the purpose of inspecting', and substituting 'for the purpose of inspecting, testing, destroying'. After the passage of this amendment, section 42(1)(a) will state that an inspector may, at any time, if he has reasonable cause to believe that any stock are on any land, enter any land for the purpose of destroying stock. That is a power that a stock inspector will have when this amendment is passed.

The fact is that the Chief Inspector has the same power. If he exercises it, this amendment requires compensation to be paid according to just terms. The same requirement has not been placed on a stock inspector because the requirement relates only to proposed new part VA. Therefore, when the Chief Inspector exercises the power, compensation must be paid on just terms but, if the stock inspector exercises that power, that requirement applies to no greater extent than it would have applied before.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Section 10 in the act. Delegation.

Mr EDE: This is a power that the inspector has in his own right, apart from the powers that can be delegated. Inspectors can hold powers which are delegated from a Chief Inspector of Stock but, under section 42, they can have powers which are provided to them. The stock inspector will have power to go on to any land and destroy stock, but compensation does not have to be paid on just terms.

I would like to go over the debate which has raged for quite some time about whether or not payment on just terms is available now. There are a number of different elements to that debate and there are a number of ways in which the various arguments are being mounted. Honourable members will recall that, on 24 May 1989, when I proposed an inquiry into BTEC, I asked that one of the terms of reference of the inquiry should be, without prejudice to any action before the courts of the Northern Territory, to examine and report on the probable extent of exposure or liability of the Northern Territory government to compensation claims from pastoralists should destocking orders or other administrative action taken by the Northern Territory government pursuant to the campaign be found to contravene just terms provisions in relation to the acquisition of property under the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act. That has been a matter of concern to me for quite some time. The argument has raged as to whether or not the just terms requirements in the Self-Government Act actually apply to this act.

The first argument put to me was the simple one. Section 51 of the Self-Government Act states that 'the power of the Legislative Assembly conferred by section 6, in relation to the making of laws, does not extend to the making of laws with respect to the acquisition of property otherwise than on just terms'. There has been argument, in various cases, as to whether shooting actually translates to an acquisition but, generally, the weight of the law accepts that the deprivation of a person's interest in a property which comes about because of shooting is the same as an acquisition. Having overcome that problem and determined that shooting constitutes an acquisition, if that section applied, it would have been quite simple to recognise that the Stock Diseases Act was not valid to the extent that it could determine the payment of compensation on anything less than just terms.

There is, however, a counter-argument to the effect that the Stock Diseases Act predates the Self-Government Act and that the laws of the Northern Territory in force at that date owe their continued operation to section 57(1) of the Self-Government Act, not to the exercise by the Legislative Assembly of powers conferred on it by section 6. Of course, the Legislative Assembly did not exist at the time this was brought in. The Self-Government Act repealed the acts specified in schedule 1. They were all the acts that comprised the Northern Territory Administration acts from 1910 to 1976 and none of those acts required determinations for just terms. One of the effects of the repeal of those acts could have been the repeal of all legislation made under their authority and, for that reason, a savings provision was placed into section 57(1). It states:

Subject to this act, on and after the commencing date, all existing laws of the Territory have the same operation as they would have had if this law had not been enacted, subject to alteration or repeal by or under enactment.

The argument is that the powers which applied prior to self-government continue to apply and that the ability to acquire without just terms continues. Of course, the question has been asked as to why it has taken so long to work on the Self-Government Act. It is possible that the Northern Territory government did not review the Stock Diseases Act before BTEC commenced in the Northern Territory precisely because it was concerned about the just terms requirement introduced by the Self-Government Act several years earlier.

It is quite interesting to note that the plan for the eradication of brucellosis and tuberculosis from cattle and buffalo in the Northern Territory

published in March of 1988 makes no reference to the Stock Diseases Act at all. Paragraph 1.2 proceeds on the assumption that the aims of the campaign for the most part can be achieved by agreement with individual pastoralists. It recognised that some property owners would fail to cooperate and that, in such cases, compulsory de-stocking would be ordered since it would not be possible to enforce the compulsory testing. It then talks about the possibility of Crown musters.

A considerable amount of legislation has developed as a result of that. I know of a case in which, if the Stock Diseases Act were overturned, the compensation could be \$4m. The total amount overall in the Territory would top \$100m. I have heard that that argument alone is enough to tie people up in the High Court for 6 months. If that is not enough, there is another set of arguments which, having stated that shooting is acquiring, says that it does not matter because the act does not make provision for compensation, that provision being made by administrative fiat. The counter-argument is based on a legal principle that says that a minister shall not be judged in his own court. There is the principle of apprehension of bias and there is no right for the aggrieved to obtain natural justice through that process. The entire question of natural justice arises. That is enough to tie up a second set of QCs in the Supreme Court for 5 or 6 years.

Mr Speaker, I am saying that the question of whether or not just terms apply to the whole of the act is a legal minefield. The beauty of the amendment is that it makes it clear that, in relation to that part at least, just terms will apply. But why have we limited it only to that particular part? Why are we saying only that, when the actions of the Chief Inspector of Stock result in the need for compensation to be paid, that compensation has to be paid on just terms?

If the act were enacted now, just terms would apply to the acquisition of property because of the Self-Government Act. The doubt exists because the legislation predates the Self-Government Act. There is the argument that just terms would apply to the new part anyway because it is enacted after the Self-Government Act. To avoid any doubt, the minister has placed it in the amendment. However, it does not apply to other parts.

Section 42 of the principal act relates to the powers of an inspector. I have some problems in coming to grips with the amendments to section 42. Given the power of a Chief Inspector of Stock to delegate to a stock inspector, why is it necessary to give a stock inspector the carte blanche right to go on to a piece of land and ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Do anything he wants.

Mr EDE: Exactly.

Mr Perron: There might be foot and mouth disease or rabies.

Mr EDE: That is covered by the Exotic Diseases Act. We are talking about the Stock Diseases Act.

Mr Reed: You do not think that they are complementary?

Mr EDE: They are, but the matters he mentioned are covered by the Exotic Diseases Act.

Mr Speaker, the amendment to section 42 will allow a stock inspector to have the power to go on to land or enter any building, vehicle, vessel or aircraft for the purpose of inspecting, testing, destroying, treating or seizing stock, fodder, fittings, carcass or dung. There is absolutely no provision whatsoever that they must be diseased. Previously, he was allowed to enter for the purpose of inspecting, treating, seizing stock, fodder, fittings, carcass or dung of an animal which he had reasonable cause to believe was infected or diseased. He has had the power if animals were considered sick. We are now giving him the power to shoot animals even if they are not sick.

No doubt, the honourable minister will make all things clear. After he has clarified that matter, he can then tell us why, after giving this stock inspector incredible powers which are not shared by his boss, there is no requirement for the payment of just compensation. The minister intends to give people incredible powers which will allow them to blaze away at stock which are completely healthy and it seems only reasonable that the owners should be paid just compensation. Not to do so will raise an awful cry across the pastoral lands of the Northern Territory. I do not think that the minister has really thought through the results of what he is doing. Hopefully, he will agree to the amendment. Otherwise, we will be in for a fairly vitriolic period during the committee stage.

Mr Speaker, I thought that the amendments to section 42 related to the current shoot-outs, but I am sure that that cannot be the case. After all, those shoot-outs are occurring now. I must say that I am incredibly concerned about the way those shoot-outs are continuing. I was told the other day that 26 000 head of cattle - say 20 000, to allow for some exaggeration - are currently being shot out between the Fitzmaurice and Daly Rivers. I also have it on good authority that no beast infected with TB or brucellosis has ever been detected in that area before.

Mr Reed: We have had things on your good authority before.

Mr Perron: Yes. Were any of them blue?

Mr Reed: Polka dots perhaps?

Mr EDE: Okay. I have written to the honourable minister asking him for details of the proposed shoot-out. I have asked him for details of this particular case. He does not answer my letters and therefore I have to ask the questions in here.

Mr Speaker, we also have the continuing pursuit of the poor old buffalo. I have said before that there were too many buffalo in the wetlands and that the numbers needed to be reduced. However, the idea of spending millions of dollars on the pursuit of the last buffalo, when buffalo are shot to be eaten by the hordes of wild pigs which are proliferating in the area, is absurd. Those pigs carry TB. When they die in the waterholes, their bodies are cannibalised by other pigs which break open the sacs where the disease is concentrated. Cattle then lick the bones, Mr Speaker, and the minister tries to tell me that they will not get TB. I cannot believe it and neither can a number of veterinary surgeons with practical experience in the Top End.

Mr Reed: Ask the federal minister about his view.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the federal minister has put together the committee which has been travelling around to examine these matters. I have been doing

my best to convince the federal minister that he should recommend to the committee that it should bail out as far as buffalo are concerned.

Mr Reed: He does not listen very much, does he?

Mr EDE: I must admit that, when I talk to people interstate about this, my biggest problem is what they say when I just about have them convinced that we are right. They say: 'Yes, but your government is not fighting it. Why should we take up the fight if your own government is not prepared to?'

Mr Reed: It is a national scheme. Can't you understand that?

Mr EDE: You are part of that national scheme. You have the right, through the committee, to ask for variations of that national scheme.

Mr Reed: What would they say? They would cut the Northern Territory off. We would be cut off from world markets.

Mr EDE: If he had the intestinal fortitude to do so, the minister could ask for buffalo to be excluded from the definitions under BTEC. Thank goodness the federal member, Warren Snowdon, has had the intestinal fortitude to do so. Indeed, I would like to read into Hansard a letter which Mr Snowdon has sent to the federal minister, Hon John Kerin, a copy of which was provided to me. It makes very good sense. It states the argument very carefully and succinctly. Perhaps his words will convince the honourable minister where mine have failed. It is dated 13 November 1989 and is addressed to Hon John Kerin, Minister for Primary Industry and Energy, Canberra. It says: 'I am writing in relation to the proposed culmination of the BTEC program ...'

Mr REED: A point of order, Mr Speaker! This is a debate about the Stock Diseases Amendment Bill and I wonder what direct relevance this matter has to the contents of the bill.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, speaking to the point of order, clause 5(a) refers to the disease control program and the minister stated in his second-reading speech that it related to BTEC and its results. I do not think that I could be much closer to the point.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, as I said, the letter was dated 13 November. It says:

Dear Minister,

I am writing in relation to the proposed culmination of the BTEC program, the impact of the program and the proposed 1992 deadline on the buffalo industry in the Northern Territory.

I appreciate that you have had a number of discussions with buffalo producers and am grateful for that. I am also aware that buffalo producers, both individually and collectively, have had the opportunity to make submissions to the operational management review of the BTEC program currently under way.

Nevertheless, I am concerned that a viable buffalo industry be allowed to continue and develop in the Northern Territory. I am not convinced of the merits of the applications of the BTEC program to buffalo.

Neither am I satisfied that the Northern Territory government, in administering the BTEC program, has given sufficient or appropriate recognition to the unique circumstances surrounding the buffalo industry in the Top End. In addition, there has been much public comment about the NT's administration of the BTEC program generally, with allegations of maladministration, even corruption.

I understand the concern of beef producers who have essentially funded BTEC and have done so on the basis of the 1992 deadline being met by buffalo as well as beef producers. However, to treat buffalo as if they were beef cattle is, in my view, inappropriate and ill-advised.

As I understand it there is no firm field evidence that buffalo under field conditions will transmit TB to beef. If this is the case, then it seems absurd to treat buffalo as if they are cattle. In addition, I am advised that the appropriateness of the reactor test as applied to buffalo is questionable and is regarded by those in the industry as unreliable. Under these circumstances, it seems that buffalo producers are being unfairly penalised by the BTEC program.

I would submit that the most appropriate way to deal with BTEC and the buffalo industry is to acknowledge that it is not appropriate to keep buffalo as beef cattle and that the 1992 deadline should not be applied to buffalo. A moratorium on the application of the BTEC program to buffalo should be imposed while an extensive research program is undertaken to establish, firstly, whether or not buffalo transmit TB to cattle and, secondly, to devise an appropriate test for buffalo.

In the meantime, buffalo producers should be encouraged to further develop domestic buffalo herds and to continue to cull feral buffalo with the objective of developing some way of managing this herd as a means of minimising the environmental impact of it. I do not believe it is currently feasible to eradicate feral buffalo as the current BTEC regime would require.

The issue of a properly devised management regime for buffalo development in conjunction with buffalo producers is of paramount importance. I am most concerned that the continuation of the current BTEC program is jeopardising a very important infant industry and penalising primary producers involved in an industry which is very important to the regional economy of northern Australia.

I would be pleased if, in your position as head of the Australian Agricultural Council, you could raise the issues in correspondence with the council at an appropriate time in the near future. I look forward to your comments and advice on these matters.

Yours faithfully,  
Warren Snowdon,  
Member for the Northern Territory.

Mr REED: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for Stuart has been quoting from a document. I ask that he table that document.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the letter from the member for the Northern Territory to the federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy.

Leave granted.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the impact of buffalo shoot-outs on the tourism industry has been quite spectacular of late. At the Bark Hut Inn some time ago, I talking to some tourist operators who were quite outraged at the fact that the buffalo, which we use to symbolise our Territory in all sorts of promotional material, was being shot out. It is absolutely ridiculous. The 2 things which people come to the Top End to see are buffalo and crocodiles. A group of tourists at the Bark Hut Inn had spent 3 days searching for buffalo in the wild, and that is becoming a common experience. They eventually saw one, right on the last day, when they did the Yellow Waters trip. They saw a single old bull buffalo, standing at the edge of the water, gut-shot, blood streaming from his nose into the water, just managing to remain standing by the force of his legs. Mr Speaker, you can imagine the impression that those tourists left with? That is what people are seeing.

Mr Reed: Have you taken it up with the federal minister?

Mr EDE: I have taken it up with you and I have taken it up with the federal minister. Mr Speaker, it is the BTEC program.

Mr Perron: It is not the BTEC program.

Mr EDE: It is. The order was signed by Mr Wells. It was for a BTEC de-stock.

Mr Perron: Total eradication in the Kakadu plan of management. You could stop BTEC tomorrow and it would still go ahead.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the location is beside the point. I would like to again propose that the honourable minister utilise Tortilla Flats as a location to develop a camera herd. That suggestion has been pooh-poohed and perhaps Tortilla Flats is not the best place. Another possible location for such a camera herd, allowing people to view the animals in the wild, would be the Marrakai Reserve. It does not adjoin the sea and therefore there would be no problem of the buffalo causing salt-water intrusion. It is a coherent area of land reasonably close to Darwin on the way to Kakadu and, if adequately fenced and stocked with wild buffalo caught elsewhere, would provide the minister with an opportunity to demonstrate that it is possible to keep cattle clean and that his tests work, whilst allowing buffalo to be viewed by tourists who want to see them in their wild state.

Obviously, there would need to be an alternative to the tail tag system. I doubt that people would want to see green and blue tags sticking to these wild buffalo. However, it would not be beyond the expertise of officers of the minister's department to come up with some alternative. That could be done fairly rapidly. It would help tourist operators and it would help the tourism industry generally. It would also demonstrate to producers that the minister at least believes that it is possible to maintain a herd of clean buffalo with his testing procedures, without having the animals recontaminated by feral pigs.

Mr Reed: They are not my testing procedures. They are the nation's testing procedures.

Mr EDE: You are the one who is always backing them up.

Mr Reed: That is right.



Mr EDE: We have that on the record. Thank you.

Mr Reed: Thank you. Be honest about it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the provisions relating to the valuation panel should definitely be supported. The proposed means of working out the valuation seems quite reasonable. I note, however, that there are some different provisions in proposed new section 32 which I find rather difficult to understand. I hope that the honourable minister, either at this stage or during the committee stage, will be able to explain them. I am quite genuine in this. I just do not understand why buffalo are treated differently to unmustered stock and to stock which have reacted to a test of a type. I just want to know what the rationale is. The minister probably has a very good reason for taking that approach but I have not been able to work it out.

Mr Speaker, in general, the bill goes some of the way. We have just terms for what the Chief Inspector of Stock does and that is certainly better than having the whole area in doubt, but the concern the pastoralists have is that, if you are onside, you will end up with a chief inspector's order whilst, if you are not onside, you can end up with an order from a stock inspector, thereby losing your right to compensation under just terms.

A member interjecting.

Mr EDE: I do not care who has approved it. We are the people who have to approve it - this House. I cannot approve it in the current format and, unless the honourable minister is able to bring forward some very strong evidence to show that my interpretation is incorrect - and, when I showed the provision to lawyers, they came up with the same interpretation as was provided to me by a pastoralist - I will have no alternative but to push for my amendment during the committee stage. I hope, however, that this is not an issue that will create a lot of problems and that the honourable minister will see his way clear to indicating in his reply that he will support my amendment so that we can get beyond this incredible legal argument which is tying up an enormous number of resources within the department and with pastoralists etc. I believe that all of us would prefer to see those resources put to some other purpose. In no way, could my amendment be construed as being retrospective. Basically, it would come into force at the same time as the amending legislation which, as I understand it, will be on 1 January 1990.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise basically to support the legislation proposed by the minister and to say that, having read the second-reading speech, I was really pleased that I went to the recent field day at McArthur River. I heard more about the legislation at the field day than would ever be contained in a second-reading speech.

There is one point that I would like the minister to consider and perhaps clarify in his concluding remarks. Some time ago, the minister and the industry established a tribunal to determine the rates of compensation for de-stocks, and that has obviously worked pretty well, probably more in a public relations sense than in any other way. I raise the matter because I believe that the system applies in the case of a de-stock but, when a shoot-out occurs, the minister makes a determination of the amount to be paid for the stock to be shot out. Would the minister confirm whether that is the case? Would the minister consider using the tribunal arrangement for valuing cattle that are to be shot out or, alternatively, give the owners involved an

opportunity to appeal, for various reasons, against the determination at some later date.

I raise the matter for 2 reasons. Firstly, the system has worked in relation to de-stocks and, if the minister's determination is very close to the market price, there will not be much variation from the tribunal's determination in any case. It would give confidence to producers to know that the value of stock involved in a shoot-out was set by this tribunal, and that seems to be pretty fair. More importantly, it would give producers the opportunity to receive reasonable compensation in situations in which unfortunate things happen to good stock in the course of a shoot-out. The minister would be aware that, on a couple of occasions, good breeding bulls and cows have been caught up in a shoot-out. At present, the producer gets the \$160 or the \$260 or whatever the general rate is when, in fact, he has paid thousands for them. That is not the fault of the minister. It is not anybody's fault in particular, but I think it ...

A member interjecting.

Mr TUXWORTH: It is not a deliberate act and it is not a careless act in most cases. There may be a fault, but it is not intentional. I am raising it because I believe that some fairness or equity should be made available to people who find themselves in that situation. Generally, it does not involve large numbers of cattle. The valuable beasts are generally kept under close surveillance. If the minister could give some consideration to those 2 points, the people in the industry would think that that was a fair thing.

In relation to the proposal from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, his argument seems to be fairly reasonable. If the government cannot find any flaws in it, I believe that it would be worthy of support. I would be interested to hear the minister's remarks in relation to the amendment proposed by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition at some stage. On the surface, it seems to have some merit.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, my remarks in this debate will not be extensive, but I would like to say at the outset that I believe the minister's second-reading speech could have been written a little better. I believe that it contained an inaccuracy of a type which should not occur in a minister's second-reading speech. The minister said: 'While the BTEC program will benefit in the short term, these changes will also help to ensure that the government has the ability to act swiftly and without unreasonable delay in the event of an outbreak of a potentially catastrophic animal disease such as foot and mouth disease or rabies'.

After reading through the exotic diseases legislation and making my own inquiries of learned people in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, it is my considered opinion that the legislation implemented now in relation to exotic diseases takes care of that situation. Compensation can be paid. Thus, why was mention of an exotic disease included when we are talking about brucellosis and tuberculosis? Obviously, the person who wrote the speech did not know the definition of an exotic disease in this context. An exotic disease is one which is not already in the country. Brucellosis and tuberculosis are here but foot and mouth and rabies are not. I would be pleased if the honourable minister could explain his comments in light of the fact that compensation in respect of exotic diseases is payable under the Exotic Diseases (Animals) Compensation Act.

In his second-reading speech, the minister said: 'Two important components, which have been addressed by these amendments to ensure that BTEC objectives can be met are, firstly, a clarification of the powers of the government to ensure that major eradication programs such as BTEC can progress without delay ...'. Mr Speaker, at the rate that the shoot-out has been going, I do not think that there has been any delay. Perhaps that is not an inaccuracy, but it could have been put a little better. The minister went on to say: 'The Northern Territory government, the cattle and buffalo industries of the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth government have a considerable investment in the success of BTEC in achieving its current target of freedom from tuberculosis in 1992'. That may be so. They are trying to achieve a projected target of freedom from TB in 1992, but that begs the question again. When this projected and expected freedom from TB in 1992 is achieved, which I do not think will occur because I believe that, for many years after that target date, if not for all time, there will be outbreaks ...

A member: I doubt it.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You doubt it.

Mr Speaker, it begs the question of what happens after 1992 when we say that we will be free of TB. The very powerful farm lobby in the USA will still ensure that restrictions are placed on Australia's entry into the US meat market. It could then be said that, whilst our part in the BTEC will not exactly have gone for nothing, the effect of it will have been minimised.

As far as I can work out, the compensation that has been paid to date to the owners of shot cattle and buffalo has been worked out by agreement between the producers and the government. It seems that the goodwill of the producers and the people on the ground who work with the department has been the only reason why court cases have not eventuated from queries about the level of compensation and irregularities in the implementation of BTEC which we all know about.

I believe that this legislation should have been introduced much earlier. The fact that it has been left until now shows that there has been an insufficient appreciation of the necessity for it. It should have been thought about years ago. I suppose it is a case of better late than never. Unpleasantness has been avoided in relation to compensation simply because of the goodwill of the pastoralists and the stock inspectors. I believe that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has a cogent reason for putting forward his amendment and I hope that the honourable minister pays attention to it. Perhaps, if all of his advisers are not here when we get to the committee stage, the honourable minister could perhaps report progress rather than simply dismissing the proposed amendment out of hand.

Mr Reed: We are not taking the committee stage tonight.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am very pleased to hear that the committee stage is not to be taken tonight.

I believe the Northern Territory government could have done much more. As well as bringing in legislation like this years ago, it could have done much more within its own powers by paying more attention to the research into better testing procedures for TB. It is only last year and this year that CSIRO has come up with a test which is definitive to any reasonable degree in terms of judging whether an animal has TB or not. These tests do not come into the field suddenly. All the scientists who are interested in testing for

TB have known about this test, which has been worked on for a number of years. I believe that it was incumbent on the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and the honourable minister at the time - and this was about 2 or 3 ministers ago - to budget funds to aid the research, as most of the mopping up operations which are causing the greatest concern to the community in relation to BTEC are taking place in the Top End.

There are 2 tests for TB in bovines. One is done by histology and the other by bacteriology. Of the 2, the one done by a bacteriological process is the more definitive. The test that the CSIRO has initiated is one which relates to the gamma interferon process which measures cell-mediated immune response via a blood test. It is not a simple test and it takes a few days. The reaction is not experienced by the animal but occurs in the laboratory. The test takes more time in the field, necessitating more staff and a higher budget allocation. The need for more staff comes about because, when the blood is tested, a high degree of asepsis has to be observed. CSIRO used this test in a major way for the first time this year. Last year, samples were taken in the Northern Territory and sent to Melbourne for the second stage of inspection and assay. I believe that this test is being refined all the time. The antigens used in the tests are being changed from time to time to arrive at a better testing procedure. By the time the test is refined to 100% accuracy, all of our buffalo and most of our cattle will have been shot out. It will not be of as much use as it would have been had funds been allocated earlier to help CSIRO implement it. It is something like closing the door after the horse has bolted.

I would like to draw to the honourable minister's attention an inaccuracy in the bill. Clause 4 states: 'The principal act is amended by inserting after part V the following'. If the honourable minister consults the act, he will find that part V has been repealed. Something cannot be inserted after part V because part V does not exist.

I agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's remarks relating to the powers of an inspector. I am very concerned about certain provisions in clause 5 relating to section 42(1) of the principal act. Proposed new paragraph (y) refers to the inspector having 'reasonable cause to believe that any stock are suffering unduly, whether as a result of disease, injury, neglect, drought, or other cause'. I sincerely hope that inspectors will not shoot stock willy-nilly. The paragraph says that the inspector can destroy the stock or take any other action that he thinks fit, or 'order the owner, or the person in charge of the stock to destroy, or to take any other action' that he thinks fit and so orders, 'including but not limited to the provision of food, water, shelter, or treatment, to alleviate the suffering of the stock'. I heartily agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. This inspector can come on to a property and destroy an animal for any cause other than those that would make some sense - such as disease, injury, neglect or drought - and his powers of operation are not limited.

Mr Reed: Don't you think that he would have to answer for his actions?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It is too late then. He has shot my stock. He might have to answer for his actions, but what he has done is quite legal. I get compensation, but I might have been breeding my stock for years to get a particular line.

Mr Reed: Blue ones or something like that.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Don't come the raw prawn with me and be stupid. I am talking sensibly and I expect you to talk sensibly too. My stock can be destroyed and I have no comeback. My stock are dead on the ground. I can get compensation, but I might have bred those stock for 30 or 40 years to obtain a particular line or a particular character and I have lost all my breeding ...

Mr Reed: Part (y) says: 'has reasonable cause to believe that the stock are suffering unduly'.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: If I have not provided my stock with food, water, shelter or treatment and they are standing there with a gross form of disease, stressed nearly to death, and somebody shoots them, I can understand that. However, it says that it is not limited to that. The inspector can shoot everything. I ask the honourable minister to inspect that provision minutely. Again, we would rely on the goodwill of the inspector. That should not be the situation. What an inspector can and cannot do should be written definitively into legislation. We should not be writing legislation which relies on the goodwill of people.

I cannot conclude without commenting on a matter that I have commented on before. I do not know whether the government is doing anything about this, but I doubt it. It is a serious conservation issue relating to the eradication of the buffalo. What I said would happen has happened. The buffalo are being shot from the air now. Cattle in inaccessible places are being shot from the air and the carcasses are left to rot. The pigs and the dingoes will eat them.

Wild pigs and dingoes have existed in the Northern Territory for some time in a more balanced proportion to other animals. It has been my experience when breeding dingoes that a dingo bitch has about 6 pups in a litter. In the normal course of events in the bush, 2 or 3 would survive to adulthood. With this cornucopia of food provided day after day, month after month, year after year, the dingo and the pig numbers will increase. The increased dingo population will take care of the increased pig population. However, the pig population will not last forever because there is a good market overseas for pig carcasses that are field shot, and good luck to the people who are taking advantage of it. However, the dingo population will still have greater numbers than previously. Two things can happen. The dingoes will find that their man-provided feast of dead cattle and dead buffalo is limited and they will turn to the marsupials. We will see a definite fall in the number of marsupials in the wild. I believe this will happen in a couple of years. We will also see the depredations of dingoes coming closer and closer to human settlement necessitating baiting campaigns and other means of destroying them.

This will occur because we have upset the balance of nature which has been built up over the years. I do not know whether the honourable minister or the Conservation Commission is taking precautions to monitor this situation. It is occurring and it will occur in the future. I am pleased that the minister has said that the committee stage will not be taken tonight. I sincerely hope that he attends to the questions that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and I have put to him.

Debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there are a couple of issues that I would like to canvass in the debate tonight. These relate to rural matters. Earlier in the week, the member for Barkly raised some issues relating to the buffalo buy-back scheme. I would like to make a few comments on the response that he received from the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries and ask a few more questions which the minister might be able to answer next week.

The minister has stated that he intends to reduce the total number of licences to 20. There is some confusion about that in the industry, following various meetings which people have had with the minister. Some of them have been under the impression that he is talking about 20 people in the industry, meaning 20 people with licences, and others believe that he means 20 full licences. Obviously, there are a number of people in the industry who do not have full licences. In the vicinity of 35 commercial fisherman have parts of licences or whatever. In total, I believe there are something like 27.7 full licences. Different people have had different responses from the minister. He now says that he intends to reduce the number of licences to 20. I would like clarification as to whether he means 20 full licences or 20 full and part licences.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to know what rate of progress he is talking about. At one stage, he advised people in the industry that he wanted to have 4 out this year and 7 more out next year. It was unclear whether that related to getting 4 people out of the industry this year and 7 more next year, or whether it referred to 4 licences this year and 7 more next year.

Mr REED: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I was a bit confused in the first instance because the honourable member began by talking about the buffalo buy-back scheme. I think he means the barramundi buy-back scheme. I just draw the honourable members' attention to the fact that this matter is in fact on the Notice Paper in the form of the statement on the fishing industry.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the issue was very thoroughly canvassed in Tuesday's adjournment debate. I do not believe that the point I am addressing was covered in the statement on the fishing industry. Whilst the buy-back scheme was referred to in that statement, to put that forward as a reason for not discussing it further would be an unnecessary imposition on this House. It would be akin, for example, to preventing discussion of BTEC on the basis that a ministerial statement on the buffalo industry was before the House. Given that this is an adjournment debate, I believe that it is appropriate to continue to address the matter.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. However, I would ask the member for Stuart not to refer to any part of the minister's statement.

Mr EDE: Certainly, Mr Speaker. I am asking whether the minister's reference to 4 this year and 7 next year referred to licences or individual fisherman. Obviously, the best way of working through the program is to talk in terms of full or part licences so that everybody knows exactly what the minister is getting at.

Mr Reed: A licence is a licence.

Mr EDE: A licence is not a licence. Many people hold 0.2 or 0.5 of a licence whilst others hold full licences. There are something like 35 fishermen with 27.7 full licences, although I am not absolutely sure about those figures.

I am told that, to date, only 2.7 licences have been the subject of buy-back. Two full licences were held by a person who put his boat up on a sandbar. He sold his licence to another family and his wife sold a licence for something like \$135 000. The people who bought his other licence had 0.5 of a licence which they sold for some incredible amount, allowing them to cash up to run their full licence more efficiently.

Mr Reed: They sold back a licence.

Mr EDE: I believe that they sold back half a licence.

Mr Reed: It has nothing to do with how many metres of net you have. A licence is a licence to operate and you operate under the licence.

Mr EDE: As I understand it, there are 10 units to a full licence. Each unit is equivalent to 100 m of net.

Mr Reed: But, if you do not have a licence, it does not matter how many nets you have.

Mr EDE: It seems to me, Mr Speaker, that it is the expanse of net which determines the ability to catch larger or smaller numbers of barramundi.

Mr Reed: It depends how effectively you use your licence.

Mr EDE: In talking about the buy-back scheme, the major concern is the length of net which the industry or the resource can cope with. If it is judged that 20 sets of 10 units of 100 m of net will allow the barramundi resource to be sustained, we should be aiming to reach that target. Our buy-back of licences should relate to a finite amount of net which we are aiming to reach.

I was also told that the 0.2 of a licence which was bought back was held by someone who operated in the Daly area and had nowhere else to go. The 0.5 was held by the family who bought an extra licence. I suppose that the minister will determine that those licences and part licences actually total 4 licences because 4 people were involved. Perhaps the clearest way that I can express it is by saying that 27 units of net have been repurchased.

Mr Speaker, the minister also spoke about Northern Territory commercial fishing as being worth only a little over \$2m. In fact, \$3m is the more recent figure.

Mr Reed: Whose figure?

Mr EDE: It comes from the Northern Territory Commercial Fishermen's Association. He also stated that the value of recreational fishing is in the order of \$60m. I think that figure probably comes from the Touche Ross Report which came out 2 or 3 years ago. In fact, some 50% of that \$60m relates to vehicle purchase and the service industry. It is interesting that, in discussing recreational fishing, the minister was quite happy to include all the flow-on activities in the total figure whereas, when talking about commercial fishing, he used a figure which only reflected the actual value of the catch. Of course, there are flow-ons in addition to that \$3m. There is, for example, a considerable service industry in the Frances Bay area. The actual value of the industry to the Territory is much more than \$3m.

Another problem relates to legislation which restructured this whole area. That legislation was passed when the minister was still fairly new to the portfolio, as I was in the role of shadow spokesman. At that stage, many concerns were brought to me by the Commercial Fisherman's Association. The minister eventually talked to its representatives and there were some serious discussions just before the bill was passed. One area of particular concern related to the effect on people's livelihoods of provisions relating to the seizure of nets, boats and so forth in instances where wrongdoing had evidently occurred. I recall the minister saying that people would be able to apply to the courts for the return of equipment. He said that the government would not remove somebody's livelihood and continue to hold it. Mr Speaker, one person has found himself in an horrendous situation and has asked me to take the matter up.

Since the end of September, the equipment of the Chairman of the Commercial Fishermen's Association has been impounded. Previous court cases involving this person have always been dismissed. He has always been found completely innocent. However, his gear has been impounded since September. He has not even been charged with an offence. It seems that, under a certain reading of the legislation, his gear can be held without charging him with an offence.

How is it that, in this day and age, we can take away somebody's livelihood by impounding and holding equipment without even charging the person concerned? I ask the honourable minister to look very seriously at that situation and see what his department can do to ensure that it is reversed. If that is not the first and only instance of this occurring, and if we are not looking at a very strange aberration, we will have to take another look at the legislation. It is wrong to deprive people of their livelihood and to avoid the court system in this way. People can be sent to the wall without even being charged with an offence. That is a horrifying situation.

In conclusion, I would like to remind honourable members that tomorrow is the date of the fire sale at Tortilla Flats.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Is it? I didn't know that.

Mr EDE: There was an advertisement somewhere. Somebody gave it to me. I think the honourable minister can confirm that it is tomorrow. It will involve all the equipment, the banteng cattle - the lot. They will all go under the hammer. It really is a shame. Of a 6-year program, 4 years had been completed. I have spoken about this before and therefore I will not go into great detail, but I think it is very unfortunate that the plug has been pulled on that research program. The government is talking about other programs and research in the Douglas-Daly area. If I were a scientist who wanted to become involved in research, I would be very loath to come and work for the Northern Territory government, given its record.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I would say the same.

Mr EDE: Yes. Its record in relation to research programs is pretty thin on the ground. It will not even let us know what it is. The situation is a crying shame. There are all sorts of things the government could have done with the land at Tortilla Flats just to keep the project going until we had a government with a genuine desire to address the real issues involved in primary industry and to carry on research in a proper manner. I hope that the honourable minister will answer the questions that I have raised tonight.



Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak on 2 matters tonight. Firstly, I would like to add my condolences to those expressed so eloquently last night by the Minister for Transport and Works. I refer to the recent death of Barry Willing. I too knew Barry Willing for a long period of time in Darwin. We were colleagues on the Town Planning Authority for approximately 7 years. We played sport together and we were both involved in some of the community organisations in this town. I will not say that Barry was a close friend of mine, but I would like to think that Barry and I had more than a passing relationship. Our lives certainly had many common threads, which we discussed over the years.

As the honourable minister said last night, Barry was born in 1939. He was a little older than I was, but of the same era. We both married at roughly the same time and each had 2 children. Our backgrounds were very similar in that we each lost a parent at approximately the same age, as very young people and, as a result, had fairly predictable difficulties during adolescence. Neither of us finished our schooling in the first stages of our lives. We had to go to work to help to support our families and so on. Over the years, Barry and I spoke about the many things which we had in common. He was a strong-minded and very intelligent person and extremely good company.

My position with the Anti-Cancer Foundation also led to my being close to Barry. I remember very clearly the first time a malignant melanoma was diagnosed on Barry's upper arm. We discussed at some considerable length the difficulties that he faced in his particular industry and in his life, particularly as, at that stage, he was a very keen golfer. Because of this very small mark on his arm, which appeared to be a skin cancer, he had gone to the doctor who had referred him to a surgeon for a check. As a result of the check, like one of my colleagues in this House who fortunately has had a successful result, he came away with an enormous chunk taken from his arm. The doctors told him that they hoped that they had removed most of the melanoma out of his system but, of course, within a very short period of time they found that it had travelled through the lymph glands. He was then on the inevitable road which cancer takes.

Barry fought very hard. He fought very hard and very long, far longer than I ever expected a man to keep fighting. He went through some incredible treatments over the years to try to keep himself going so that he could get his affairs in order and keep doing the things that he was desperately trying to achieve. He did most of those things.

I never knew his immediate family particularly well, but I did know the person who assisted him greatly and was his great comfort and companion for the last few years of his life. I think that the work she did and the way in which she looked after Barry is to be commended. I think, unfortunately, that Bernie faces an extremely difficult period now with the loss of Barry from her life, and I would certainly like to pass my sympathy on to her and also to the remaining members of the family.

On a somewhat happier note, in one sense, I would like to refer this evening to a matter affecting my electorate: the trees on Dick Ward Drive in front of the racecourse fence. As some honourable members who travel up and down that road may remember, those trees were involved in a systematic burn-off that was taking place in and around my electorate during the latter part of October. I say 'systematic' but I do not use the word to imply that it was initiated by myself or any other person of authority in the area, but a person or persons unknown who persisted in setting fire to the place. I have chastised one person whom I found to be involved, the contractor who was

supposed to keep the area tidy by slashing and cleaning. Misguidedly, he thought that he would tidy up by burning off dead pandanus leaves around a stand of pandanus. Unfortunately he chose to do so with a howling gale blowing in the wrong direction with the result that the fire damned near burnt out my office as well as part of the Ludmilla Creek area.

The sad part about this as far as the trees near the racecourse are concerned is that the area is very wet underfoot and it has been difficult to get those trees to grow. We chose to plant black wattles there because, being a native species, they would have the best chance of coping with the local environment. They have grown very well but, unfortunately, many did not survive the fire and many constituents have asked me why we have not replaced them.

Tree doctors and nurserymen from the Conservation Commission have checked the trees and, on the best advice that I could find, we have decided to leave them for a little more of the wet season to see whether some of the trees that are showing some greenery might survive. Obviously, some are already completely dead. In the next 6 to 8 weeks, an assessment will be made of the possibility of the survival of the remaining trees and, if the prognosis is not good, there will be a total replant.

It is sad that, unfortunately, somebody who has been overzealous in the use of matches has destroyed what was a lovely stand of trees along the racecourse fence. It served a double purpose, helping to reduce traffic noise for horses in the starting gates at the lower end of the course and helping to protect the fence from the graffiti merchants who seemed to proliferate a couple of years ago. It also provided some pleasant greenery for people taking that route into Darwin in the mornings. You can rest assured, Mr Speaker, that as soon as I am aware of the likelihood or otherwise of the survival of those trees, I will be taking steps very quickly to ensure that there is a replanting program to replace the trees which have succumbed.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak this evening on a topic that has been causing me some concern. It relates to what has been explained to me to be parliamentary protocol - the way members obtain information from public servants. I discovered very early that, if I rang a public service department, I was told that I could not talk to those people without going through the official protocol channel of ringing the appropriate minister's department to seek permission. For example, as a very simple case, I wanted someone from the Conservation Commission, which comes under one of my shadow portfolios, to brief me and show me around the Casuarina Coastal Reserve which is in my electorate. I thought that was quite a reasonable request.

Mr Perron: It is a normal courtesy to ask.

Mr BAILEY: Fine. After being told initially, on a Friday afternoon, that that could be done on the Monday - and this was before I was familiar with the protocol - I received a phone call saying that it would be nice if I put my request in writing. That was almost 3 weeks ago. It would appear, first of all, that it takes more than 3 weeks to arrange such an event. I find today that the Minister for Conservation does not believe that it is worth him wasting the time of an officer of the Conservation Commission to show me through the Casuarina Coastal Reserve. If he can finally organise for me to be briefed on the specific area, then I may go to one of the offices of the Conservation Commission and be given that sort of information.

Regularly in this House, we hear members on the other side calling out: 'Get your facts right. Get it right before you say things'. My understanding is that the public service is supposed to be an apolitical arm of government, that it is there to carry out the policies and practices of the government without political interference. That leads me to believe that someone who is the opposition spokesman in a portfolio area should be given access to what I would call public domain information, which is information that is of fairly common knowledge.

Mr Perron: What do you need a public servant to walk through a park for?

Mr BAILEY: The Chief Minister is suggesting that, if I go to any of our parks or conservation areas as the shadow minister for conservation, I should not expect any sort of courtesy from the rangers who are present there.

A member: That is right.

Mr BAILEY: If that is the case, I can only say that I am ashamed of the way in which the public service is prevented, for political reasons, from giving to a member of this House information which would be given to almost any other member of the public. If this is how this government operates, I am disappointed. My understanding is that this was not the case with previous governments in this House.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to comment on the answer which the Minister for Health and Community Services gave this morning to my question relating to the Gap Neighbourhood Centre. I understand that the minister is new in the job and there may be some details that he has missed. In terms of his response to my question, he mentioned that the Gap Neighbourhood Centre was late in applying for funding. That is incorrect. It first applied for funding in October 1988, which is some 13 months ago. He also implied that the submission from the centre was not comprehensive or detailed enough. My inquiries, however, reveal that the submission certainly was to the satisfaction of his officers in Alice Springs. He also mentioned that he wanted to be certain that there are no other services like those offered at the Gap Neighbourhood Centre. From my investigations, I believe that there is nothing like it in Alice Springs.

He indicated that the Gap centre had received a grant of \$10 000. He was referring, however, to the Gap Youth Centre which is a totally separate body and quite independent of the Gap Neighbourhood Centre. I understand that the minister has problems with the number of applications which he receives and that he is short of funds. However, if he knows the history of what has occurred at the Gap Neighbourhood Centre, it may help him in his deliberations.

In the early 1970s, I first became involved with the Catholic Church in Alice Springs. It was concerned with the urban Aboriginals and the various problems that they had in the Gap area. It was a poorer suburb of Alice Springs in those days. Through St Vincent De Paul, the Catholic Church approached the government for funding and built the Gap Youth Centre. It was able to get the Marist Brothers, a teaching order, to come to Alice Springs - and that was quite an event in those days - to assist the urban Aboriginals.

Brother Ed Havelock and Brother Aiden Smith were very well known because they worked for many years in the Gap area. They built up the centre to the point where they were able to leave it in the hands of the Aboriginal

community of the Gap area. Since that time, it has been split into 3 parts: a child minding centre, a youth centre and a neighbourhood centre. These are all run independently by separate committees. Because of its historical base and the effort that has been put in by so many people, I believe that the centre is worthy of support.

Family and community support has been an important feature of the centre's services. Over the years, there have been a number of changes. Community counselling, referral and advocacy services are provided. There is a range of courses and activities such as arts, craft, yoga, playgroups, shopping trips, bush trips and social gatherings. The centre has been a launching pad for other services within that community. A large number of women have gone on to take courses at the Institute of Aboriginal Development. That is a direct result of the self-confidence that they developed through the centre.

The centre is seen by the community as playing a vital role in community and family support to the Gap area by providing a direct service and primary contact point within the community and assisting families with difficulties before the crisis point is reached. There are many alcohol problems, family problems and problems relating to children. Most of the people in the area are on social security benefits. I believe that it would be a tragedy to see the service close. I hope that the minister might take into account in his deliberations the few points that I have raised tonight and hopefully approve the funding.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, I had a very pleasant time indeed. Together with some of my colleagues, I spent some time talking to a range of people involved in small business. I want to share with my fellow members what I learned. It was a fairly comprehensive range of businesses, from a 1-person panel beating operation through to businesses employing up to 70 or 80 people. The interesting thing that I found, and this probably does not come as a surprise to many people, was that our small business community is a goldmine of good ideas and enthusiasm about the Northern Territory.

Generally, despite the fact that things are tough in the business community, I found that there is a positive attitude towards the future. People in small business are adjusting to the tough times. They are cutting costs wherever they can and doing everything possible to improve their productivity. One of the very significant lessons, to use the old expression, was that when the going gets tough, the tough get going.

Certainly, our business sector is coping with the changed circumstances. People are not complaining or whingeing but ensuring that they change their style of operation so that they can compete and operate effectively in the new circumstances. It was interesting to note how many of them were in fact surviving and flourishing by expanding, not only in terms of putting extra people on the payroll - which a number of them had done - but also by putting in new machinery, which made them more efficient, by improving their office procedures and by the installation of computer facilities in a number of cases. I take the opportunity of saying to those small business people that I was very impressed indeed with how they are coping with the much tighter and meaner environment.

A number of interesting problems came to light. We should have been debating one today except that the government, in its stupidity, refused to allow it to be brought on. I refer to the problem with so-called standover landlords which we attempted to resolve today by introducing a simple piece of

legislation. Unfortunately, the government decided that it would not proceed with that. The blocking of that legislation is a clear statement from the government about its concern for small business in the Northern Territory.

As is clear to the small business community, the government seems to have no concern at all for what is going on. What I found is that we have a wonderful resource which appears to be under-utilised by this government. It is suffering under the government's practice of providing minimal information where maximum information is required. It suffers from the government ignoring it and not taking it into consideration at all.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: And red tape.

Mr SMITH: I am coming to red tape.

When it comes to attracting new industries to the Northern Territory, particularly into the Trade Development Zone, the needs and interests of the existing small business community ...

Mr Perron: That is absolutely untrue. You just do not understand how it works.

Mr SMITH: ... do not appear to be considered at all.

For the record, the Chief Minister says that that is absolutely untrue and that I do not understand how it works. I would be happy to agree that I do not know how it works and I make the point that the small business community does not understand how it works either. That is the real message. The small business community does not have a clue, probably because the government does not have a clue about what its own aims and objectives are. One of the unfortunate things that I found is that, if the government has objectives and a vision for the Northern Territory, it certainly has not communicated it to those people down in the engine-room who are trying to get the economy moving again.

One of the things that was particularly welcomed by the business community was the Industrial Supplies Office. The Industrial Supplies Office has developed an extensive database on Northern Territory businesses and is always actively talking with the Territory enterprise community about business opportunities. It is a perfect vehicle for disseminating information on government initiatives to the local economy. However, it needs to know the details and the government needs to become actively involved in developing links between local businesses and operations like the Trade Development Zone and the upcoming Timor Gap project. I have sought out local businesses and spoken with them about the need to find avenues of opportunity through the ISO. I have spoken with them about the need to speak with each other and combine their efforts so that they can fight competitively for the multi-million dollar opportunities which will be created by the exploration of the Timor Gap.

I spoke to the small business community about things like development agreements which would ensure maximum local content wherever possible in major development projects. That concept was enthusiastically supported, which is no surprise because industry is on the record as supporting the idea of development agreements. The Confederation of Industry has made approaches to the government in the past in relation to this issue. Such agreements are being used successfully in other parts of Australia and they will be a part of the Labor government that operates in the Northern Territory.

Over-regulation is another concern of the business community. Essentially, it prefers the government to get out of the way as much as possible and to let it get on with running business. That is perfectly understandable. Where government needs to get in the way - and all businesses recognised that there was a need for government regulation of some kind or other - they particularly want to know in advance what those government regulations are and not have things suddenly imposed on them. Those needs of the small business sector are perfectly understandable and it is reasonable that the government should consider those 2 matters in particular. Red tape is very time-consuming for small business and needs to be reduced as much as possible.

We must listen to our local small business or enterprise community and give it our full attention. It is the backbone of the economic sector in the Northern Territory. More than anywhere else in Australia, the Northern Territory small business sector is the most important part of the business community and, unfortunately, we have a situation in which it has been somewhat neglected by this government.

The opposition will continue its practice of getting out into the community, including the small business community, and listening. We have discovered that the only way to find out what is happening in the community is to listen to people, to talk with them about their problems, and then to come back and try to do something about those problems.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, something has recently been drawn to my attention which, I believe, is serious enough to raise in this adjournment debate. It should be of particular interest to the Minister for Education and or the Minister for Health and Community Services. I understand that there are certain people in the community, usually young children, who have a clinical eye condition called scotopic sensitivity syndrome. The result of this is that the person finds it practically impossible to read. If the condition is not diagnosed early enough, the children are perceived to be unmanageable and naughty. They get into trouble and end up causing a lot of trouble, becoming unmanageable as they grow into their teens.

If this medical problem can be diagnosed early enough, remedial action can be taken. Whilst the scotopic sensitivity syndrome is not exactly the same in each person, it usually causes words to appear to run together on paper and to move in wiggly lines, making reading impossible. The particular instance that was brought to my attention involved a 14-year-old boy who was becoming something of a problem at school because he could not apply himself and did not appear to comprehend anything to do with reading although, when it came to the mathematics, he was way ahead of his age group. His mother undertook some training and she is now the only person in the Northern Territory skilled to diagnose this condition. The need for a particular coloured spectacle is worked out by a test. If the person with this sensitivity syndrome wears this particular coloured spectacle, whilst the condition is not cured 100%, reading becomes considerably easier. As a result, it is much easier for the afflicted person to fit in to the community and to enjoy a more pleasant and fulfilling life.

The test I refer to is called the Irlen test. It was discovered and perfected by Dr Helen Irlen in the United States. There is a lady in the Top End who has qualified in the United States to conduct this test and, to date, she has received no cooperation from any officer in any government department to undertake testing of children who may have this problem. She is not trained medically but she is a teacher.

In Western Australia, the Education Department recommends to parents of children with this particular problem that they have their child's eyes tested at an Irlen clinic. In Tasmania, the Education Department has paid for 2 people to go to the United States to obtain skills in this type of testing. Nevertheless, in the Northern Territory, not only will the Department of Education not consider anything to do with this woman's qualifications or the future of any children who may have this problem, but she receives no help at all from the Department of Education in relation to her work and no consideration for the good it could do for people in the community.

Personally, I tend to think that it is more a medical matter than an educational matter, but education departments in the states are sufficiently concerned to be interested in this and I therefore believe that the Northern Territory Minister for Education could examine the matter. It is not the same sort of test that an optometrist normally does although an optometrist or any other person in the community could be trained to do it.

The matter has only come to my attention recently and I have not yet had occasion to write to the 2 honourable ministers about the information that has come to hand. I will do so in the very near future and, when I put pen to paper, the honourable ministers will see exactly the problem that exists. After sensible consideration of the matter, they will find it very easy to take action so that children who suffer from this problem in the Northern Territory can receive treatment.

We are not talking of training anybody. This particular lady went to the United States and was trained at her own expense. She treats adults who go to see her, but not all doctors will refer people to her. There are still some doctors who will refer patients only to people with qualifications similar to their own. Whilst I agree with this line of thinking up to a point, nevertheless I believe that there is much to be learned from people who are trained other than in the strict medical sense. This lady is not trained in alternative medicine, but she is trained to detect the isotopic sensitivity syndrome condition.

This lady has received training at her own expense. She is skilled. She has received accreditation. All she wants is to receive accreditation from the Department of Education. I do not want to identify the lady but it would no doubt be easy for the honourable minister to identify her. She is a teacher and she also has accreditation in teaching children with special learning difficulties. The problem that arises, and in this case I believe that it has come about because of a rather short-sighted attitude, is that the Department of Education has put it to her that she could be considered to be moonlighting because she is working in her own time in a job very similar to that for which she is paid by the department, and there is a certain similarity. However, in this case, I believe it is a matter of using the old cliché that the end justifies the means. We should take account of the great benefits of proper testing and treatment for children afflicted with scotopic sensitivity syndrome. Even if only 1 child were successfully diagnosed and treated, it would be worth while.

Mr Reed: What is the usual incidence?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I do not know. I only received this information relatively recently. But the woman has had training so ...

Mr Reed: I wonder how prevalent it was.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: ... there is no cost to the government. People who wear coloured glasses suffer from this condition. Some people wear blue glasses to alleviate the condition and some people wear yellow. The lady told me that many people in the top end of Australia wear yellow glasses to alleviate this condition. It is not certain whether the colour of the glass has something to do with the climate, the soil, the conditions or something else. It is just a fact.

In the time left to me, I would like to briefly publicise an organisation which has been formed recently, an organisation in which the member for Wanguri is also interested. I refer to the Total Recycling Advisory Community Committee. I will not read out the aims of the committee because the constitution and formalisation is in progress but, to put it in a nutshell, the committee is concerned with the recycling of material which we use in our everyday lives but which has outlived its initial reason for being. It is not only concerned with recycling in itself but with helping to solve the mounting litter problem which is evident throughout this country and the world.

It is a very unusual organisation in that it has attracted people from the full spectrum of politics, the full spectrum of professional interest and right across the different age groups. There have been 3 meetings. I was able to attend only the most recent of these, but I found it very interesting. The business that was conducted at the meeting was very constructive. I have great faith in the continuation of the activities of this committee. I believe that, when the meetings, the constitution and other matters are formalised a little more - and the group will not be extremely formal, having recognised the need for a degree of informality - it could be very helpful to the government in putting forward reports on various matters. Certainly, a lot of planning has gone on in the 3 meetings which have been held to date.

Considerable planning has gone into the activities that the committee will undertake and therefore I can see that it could be a great help to the government in an advisory capacity in all fields of recycling. Although we are not as industrialised as the states and do not have as many people throwing litter around, it is nevertheless very good that this committee has been formed on what one might call the ground floor of the recycling issue in the Northern Territory.

I will be giving the committee my support in the future and, in my capacity, offering whatever assistance I can. I believe that we will be hearing much more about this committee in the future.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to draw to the attention of honourable members and to Territorians the difficulties that are being experienced at the Yulara resort. I remind honourable members that, during question time this morning and in comments I have made in the last couple of days, I have referred to issues arising from the impact of the pilots' dispute on that community and also, of course, in relation to housing finance. I want to address those 2 matters tonight.

I want to make it quite clear to all interested parties in this Assembly that the situation at Yulara is grave. The situation is serious indeed, not only for operators and the employees of those operators, but for their families as well. Honourable members will be aware that the pilots' dispute has had very different impacts in different parts of the country. It has been possible for people who have been put out of work because of the dispute in some parts of the country to pick up work elsewhere. In fact, the Australian Federation of Air Pilots indicated to its own members that they should be



prepared to find work elsewhere instead of working as pilots. Honourable members will be aware that that option is not available to constituents of mine who live at Yulara. There is no alternative employment for people who are living and working at Yulara.

Mr Vale: It has taken you 15 weeks to realise it.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the Minister for Tourism, which was cynical in the extreme. The fact is that I have taken considerable interest in this issue, rather than simply grabbing headlines. If the government of which he is a part had been sincere in its efforts to address the problems which have been experienced by my constituents at Yulara, the undertaking given by the Minister for Transport and Works about the return of flights would not have had to have been extracted from him in question time this morning.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us be under no illusion about this. In question time, I drew the attention of honourable members to the Yulara Resort Pilots' Dispute Fact Sheet, Day 99 which says: 'Day 99 and still not 1 Ansett flight into Ayers Rock'. It continues:

Ansett has a hangman's noose around the throat of the Yulara resort and continues to slowly throttle the living existence out of small and large business enterprises that have built an award-winning tourist destination, by not honouring their legal and moral obligations to operate a guaranteed regular daily air schedule of flights on the route between Alice Springs and Ayers Rock, a route they have an exclusive monopoly over and refuse to allow any other operator to provide a service on.

It continues in that vein. I was pleased to hear the Minister for Transport and Works say in question time this morning that Yulara would be receiving 3 services a week, commencing on 27 November. I was, however, somewhat concerned about the dubitative status of the expression 'is supposed to start on 27 November'. The minister went on to say, as I recollect, that there may be some adjustment to that commencement date. I think it is high time that my constituents at Yulara were informed of that fact and I am relieved that, as their local member, I will be in a position to so inform them.

The Minister for Tourism has simply been headline-grabbing on this issue without really achieving a great deal. There has been a serious impact on families at Yulara. Many of the young families who come to work at Yulara do so because they are endeavouring to improve their lot. Often, because of high interest rates and other financial difficulties elsewhere, they have been forced to come to the Territory in search of work. In cases where both parents have been able to find work at Yulara, the downturn has been a cause of serious distress.

Mr Manzie: Not only Yulara, Neil.

Mr BELL: Indeed, not only Yulara. I remind the honourable minister that I have taken a keen interest in the concerns of my constituents in this regard and I believe that the situation in establishments in various places around my electorate has been seriously affected. The time available to me in this debate prevents me from giving details in that regard but I believe that the situation is particularly pressing at Yulara. It is high time that some pressure was brought to bear on Ansett Airlines to resume that service and I

will be pleased to communicate to my constituents the expectation that it is anticipated that the service will resume next week.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me turn to the question of housing finance at Yulara and the high dudgeon with which the Minister for Lands and Housing criticised my comments this morning. As I pointed out at the end of question time, apart from being offensive, his references to my remarks as 'scurrilous' were quite unwarranted and demonstrated an ignorance of the situation and the details of the public debate which do him no credit whatsoever. The fact is that I have endeavoured to obtain details about the funding processes, not only for Housing Commission finance at Yulara, but also for the wider involvement of government dollars in that establishment.

I remind honourable members of the comments made by the Minister for Industries and Development who flatly refused to provide details of the financial dealings of the Yulara Corporation. The Minister for Lands and Housing was not even up with that when he talked about the Yulara Development Corporation this morning. He obviously needs to do a little bit of homework, not only with respect to the debate but also with respect to the creation of the various entities in the process of the construction of the Yulara resort. The fact is that, during the committee stages of debate on the budget on 11 October, the Minister for Industries and Development flatly refused to provide information about the financial dealings of the corporation.

I was pleased to hear today that we were starting to get somewhere. Obviously, obtaining this information will be like drawing teeth but let me assure the government that I will persist. The Yulara Corporation receives large amounts of public money. The CLP government can remain relatively unscathed in public debate whilst it spends its own money or untied grants from the Commonwealth. However, when it comes to spending Commonwealth State Housing Agreement money, be it nominated funds or grant funds, and paying them to a private company, I am rather surprised that the Minister for Lands and Housing can defend a decision not to provide information about such financial dealings. I hasten to add that he provided some information this morning. I will be studying that in the context of the fairly scant public information that is available about the corporation's finances in the hope of enlightening my constituents who live at Yulara and who are rather interested in finding out the basis on which the government is involved with the resort.

There is another matter which I want to raise. I respond further to the interjections from the Minister for Tourism. He is accusing me of being uninterested in the plight of people in the tourist industry in central Australia who have been affected by the pilots' dispute. I point out to him that I took a keen interest in the recent seminar organised by the Alice Springs Regional Tourist Association. I am pleased to see that the chairman of the association is with us in the gallery today. My conversations with him and other people in the association, as well as the transactions of the conference, suggested to me that it was a particularly valuable exercise. I continue to be concerned, as I said earlier, about the impact which the airlines dispute has had on many of my constituents in different places, particularly those people who are out of work at Yulara.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to make some comments concerning the airline service to Yulara and the effects of the lack of services on the tourist industry in the Northern Territory and, I guess, Australia in general. I believe that the effects of the strike are so widespread in Australia that they will greatly affect the balance of trade figures for the coming quarter. It is quite an interesting dispute.

Everybody seems to hold the view that the airline pilots got themselves into difficulty because they did not stay within the system. Of course, there is no law which requires them to stay within the system. I wonder how the unions are reacting to tonight's news that the Australian Federation of Air Pilots has lost its case in the Supreme Court and possibly faces a \$10m fine as a result of the industrial action that has taken place. Anybody in his right mind would have realised many months ago that there is a worldwide shortage of pilots. In fact, I am told that, in the United States alone, airline executives have estimated a requirement of some 40 000 new airline pilots by 1995. It is really no wonder that our airlines cannot attract pilots to come here to fly in the Australian domestic aviation scene.

There are a number of disturbing features, the least of them being the Yulara to Alice Springs service. Despite what the member for MacDonnell said tonight, if the plane had been flying backwards and forwards and there had been no cessation in the intra-Territory service offered by Ansett NT, there would have been very few people on those planes. We are not getting the feeds from interstate and internationally that we require. We all await the resumption of some semblance of order in the tourist industry in the Northern Territory. That will only come about with the return of scheduled services throughout Australia, not the least being the Alice Springs to Cairns service which is a key for our international tourism visitation. The dispute could not have come at a worst time for Territorians because in the Centre traditionally we have always had good market penetration without international visitation from about August through till Christmas, after Christmas and towards the end of January into February. Of course, this period will suffer as well.

I believe the current dispute is really an argument about deregulation. It really means to an end for the airlines and the federal government to prepare to meet the changes that will occur in 1991 with deregulation. The end result of the dispute will mean much lower operating costs for the airlines, probably increased productivity and efficiency, certainly fewer staff, and increased profits. From that point of view, I would not have any argument, but I would not say that the ends justify the means. The danger for the Northern Territory ...

Mr Bell: Whose means?

Mr POOLE: I am talking about the airlines' means.

Mr Bell: What about the pilots?

Mr POOLE: The pilots have become a victim.

Mr Bell: Do you reckon 30% was fair?

Mr POOLE: No, I am not saying that. I am saying that the pilots have become a victim of circumstances as much as anybody else because they were denied the opportunity - and it has never been denied before - to at least sit down and argue their case.

It has already been acknowledged that northern Australia will suffer dramatically at the end of the day. It has already been acknowledged by the airline industry that Alice Springs in particular and probably Darwin will never again achieve the flight frequencies that existed prior to the dispute. At certain times of the day in central Australia, we had 6 or 7 jets on the ground on any one day and Darwin had at least 5 or 6 jets on the ground at any

one time during the day. Both Ansett and Australian Airlines admit that it is unlikely that we will ever have the frequency of flights again.

Alice Springs has become a hub within Australia with almost daily flights to and from Cairns, Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne, Darwin, Perth, Brisbane and Townsville. Like any other business, airlines are in the game to make a dollar. If you own an aircraft, the only way you can make a dollar out of it is to have it fly for as long as possible, for every hour of the day. Deregulation in the United States has led to a reduction in the price of air travel between the major population centres. The medium to small cities and towns in the United States have suffered, with reduced services and reduced capacity in many cases. Territorians would be quite surprised to learn that there are cities of 200 000 or 300 000 people in the United States which are serviced only once or twice daily by small 10 or 15 seat commuter aircraft.

It is obvious that competition will force prices down on the eastern seaboard between Melbourne and Sydney, taking in Canberra and also, to a certain extent, the Brisbane route. It is interesting that neither Capital nor Compass, the 2 new airlines which have been announced and which, I understand, have ordered planes, has made any comment at all about competing in the Northern Territory. Their only interest seems to be Perth and possibly the Gold Coast.

I do not think that either Ansett or Australian Airlines will abandon the Northern Territory. In fact, the manager of Australian Airlines made the point that it intends to increase its market penetration in the Northern Territory, through Yulara if it can. I would welcome that move. However, the danger to us is the commercial reality. If you can fly a plane that is fully loaded between Melbourne and Sydney, why would you want to fly to Darwin with its seasonal loading problems? You would know that the plane would be out of the main moneymaking area for at least some 10 hours. I think we will end up with a number of flights operating at reasonable times during the day to carry the existing full fare paying commercial traffic. However, the majority of our flights will probably depart from the eastern seaboard in the late evening, arrive at midnight in Alice Springs and 2 am or 3 am in Darwin, possibly leaving Darwin at 5 am or 6 am so that the plane can be back in the southern marketplace at 7 am or 8 am.

It is quite obvious that, most likely, we will lose all the major discounted fares such as children's fares. There will not be the opportunity to pick up one-way, cheap, holiday fares out of the Northern Territory at Christmas time. I would be very surprised if there are any moves to accommodate what used to happen fairly regularly in the Northern Territory, with cheap tickets on the flights arriving at Christmas time simply in order to reduce the costs of bringing in the planes to move people out.

It is clear, from talking to some of the many people who move throughout the Northern Territory fairly regularly in the course of conducting their business, that the systems have changed in the retail and commercial business market. The fax and the telephone have introduced a completely new pattern of travel for the commercial traveller. People who used to come to the Northern Territory quarterly now come once a year or once every 6 months.

There have been some interesting moves. I would like to take the optimistic outlook for the future. Nobody realised that the dispute would go on for as long as it has. In the United States, Eastern Airlines pilots went on strike for higher wages some 11 months ago and they are still on strike. Who knows what will happen in Australia? Will the dispute continue for

another 4 months or 6 months? I certainly hope not. If that is the case, we will suffer terribly during the holiday season next year.

In Queensland, there was some talk about setting up a strike-free airline. I suppose the theory is fine, but I think there is a bit of political double-speak there. However, I would still like to see us sit down and see if we can do some similar deals in the Northern Territory. Maybe we could get our own holiday airline running into the Territory. I do not think it would be necessary to buy planes or anything like that. There are some interesting concepts.

I think the future of holiday airline packages lies in the charter airline market, as occurred in both the United States and Europe. Whilst there have been some fairly classic disasters in the UK and Europe, such as Laker Air, almost all our holiday destinations are serviced by charter companies. Some of them, of course, are simply subsidiary companies of the larger airlines. We should not make the mistake of comparing ourselves to the United States or Europe in terms of deregulation. Our experience will probably be very different simply because of the difference in the population base. Undoubtedly, it will take many months and possibly years to re-educate the travelling public.

We have not yet realised what damage the convention market has suffered. We are all aware of odd cases, such as the cancellation of a conference in the Northern Territory which would have involved about 200 people. That was a great pity. To this day, there are really no moves to book major conventions in the Northern Territory. Logically, that market takes 12 months to develop, primarily because people plan their conventions from year to year. If we started to advertise and spend millions of dollars tomorrow, it would certainly take us 12 or 15 months to recover in the international area and, certainly, up to 6 months in the local area.

A great deal of thought has to be given to how we are going to sell the Northern Territory as a destination in the coming months. There will obviously have to be more emphasis on holiday packages, the average motorist towing a caravan or campervan and, of course, the coach companies. It is apparent that the Tourist Commission is busily working on those prospects at present. Hopefully, there will be a light at the end of the tunnel. However, one of the disappointing things about the Alice Springs seminar was the fact that we were sitting around talking about what we were going to do when the strike finished. Despite what the federal government thinks, the strike is still having major effects on everybody, particularly the long-haul destinations and places like Tasmania which rely almost solely on aircraft to bring tourists in and take them out. I am sure that northern Queensland and places like Broome are suffering just as badly as we are here in the Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that the strike will certainly ruin the economy of Australia. So far it has ruined the tourist industry. I believe that the ramifications are much greater than anyone thinks. We are all going to have a hard time, certainly for the next 6 months and possibly for the next couple of years. It is still quite incredible that nobody is sitting down and actually talking in an effort to solve the dispute.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

STATEMENT  
Recruitment and Retention in NTPS

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, today's Northern Territory Public Service plays a significant and vital role in many facets of Territory activity. Public servants play the key role in the delivery of services to Territorians in all parts of the Territory and in the implementation of government programs. At present, Northern Territory public servants make up some 21% of the Territory work force. As the Territory continues to grow and develop and as opportunities emerge in the private sector, this proportion will decline. However, a strong and effective public sector work force will continue to be required to carry out the delivery of government services and to provide the framework of administrative support for the range of government activities.

I believe today's Northern Territory Public Service deserves support and commendation for the role that it is playing. It is an energetic, capable and committed organisation which meets the particular challenges of the Northern Territory in a creative and progressive way. We all know of individual public servants who display commitment and dedication even in the face of the most daunting circumstances. From time to time, we have the opportunity to commend them, publicly or privately. The collective result of their efforts is a level of skill and professionalism in service delivery and in the implementation of government programs which too often passes unnoticed. We have come to expect outstanding service performance, even to rely on it. When there are difficulties or problems, we complain and criticise.

The purpose of this statement is not simply to place publicly on record the government's support for and confidence in the public service, although such a statement would clearly be appropriate and warranted. The government understands that maintaining a skilled and effective public service depends critically on our willingness to accept the role of a responsible employer. This we have done. But, circumstances change and the needs of our public service change. It is, therefore, our responsibility as a government to move with these changes and to continue to meet the reasonable needs and legitimate aspirations of those whom we employ. This does not mean that we will be able to respond positively to every demand made on us. We will certainly respond sympathetically, but we will not always be able to accede. There are very relevant budgetary considerations which dictate the extent to which we can meet the demands of our public servants for improved terms and conditions of employment. I am sure everyone, and certainly our public servants, understands these realities, but we do accept the need to maintain a level of competitiveness in the market. Not only is this a responsibility which we have to the public servants themselves, it is also a responsibility we have to the Territory community. If we fail to maintain that reasonable market competitiveness and allow the quality of our public servants to deteriorate, then it is the community which suffers.

This is not to suggest that the public servants themselves are not members of the Territory community. Of course they are, and they are highly valued as such. One of the government's prime objectives since self-government has been the development of a stable population committed to the Territory's future. I believe that we have been extraordinarily successful in this regard, but we certainly cannot afford to take our eyes off this objective. The key to our success has been the development of a community with a sense of future, a place where people believe they and their families have a secure future and an

attractive lifestyle. Retaining Northern Territory public servants as part of this committed community is clearly going to depend on the government being seen to be fair and reasonable as their employer. Mr Speaker, this we will be.

The most recent evidence of our positive and supportive approach to public servants has been the award restructuring negotiations undertaken under the auspices of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. Negotiations have been concluded between the government and the unions and an agreement will go before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission this week for ratification. The benefits of this for public servants subject to this ratification will be an average wage increase of \$15 per week commencing immediately. A further average increase of \$15 per week will take effect in June 1990, subject to satisfactory progress with structural efficiency improvements. The government is prepared to support further wage increases over the period to March 1991, in line with award restructuring, and has concluded a Memorandum of Understanding to that effect with relevant trade union representatives. This memorandum covers other aspects, including training, job classification and award conditions.

Under the principles guiding the award restructuring program, the Territory government has acknowledged that greater productivity from its work force would be met appropriately with increases in wages. Our approach to the negotiations has clearly demonstrated our commitment, and I look with confidence to public servants to show that they intend to keep their side of the arrangement.

The government believes that it is now time to address a number of other issues relevant to the recruitment and retention of public servants and teachers. The strength and competitiveness of the Northern Territory Public Service and the Northern Territory Teaching Service clearly depend on our ability to continue to attract high-quality recruits and, even more importantly, our ability to retain people with skills and expertise. My emphasis is on retention, and I want to keep in the Northern Territory those people who are already making such an important contribution.

The package of measures which the government has now decided to introduce is designed particularly to meet the specific problems which public servants and teachers face in the Northern Territory and to cater for their needs. Of major significance are the needs of government officers serving in remote areas, and I will make particular mention of these shortly. I believe the package we have approved is responsible from the point of view of the government as an employer and, of course, the government as custodian of the public purse. I am confident also that it will be well received by our public servants and our teachers because it has been structured to respond to the concerns which they themselves have put to us.

What the Territory government has sought to do in this package is to provide: fair and appropriate financial reward for the efforts of our public servants and teachers; special incentives and special rewards for those who provide special services, including service in remote areas; workplace satisfaction; and new opportunities to establish a career path for public servants through improved staff development and professional development arrangements. The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government will elaborate on these staff development matters in particular shortly.

I turn now to details of the package which the government has approved. I have already advised honourable members of the award restructuring negotiations which will add significantly to the wage packets of Territory public servants. In addition, the government has decided to introduce a number of general incentives which will apply to all Northern Territory public servants and teachers. These incentives have been developed to address particular Territory-wide issues and, we believe, will be of significant benefit to our public servants and our teachers and will contribute to the very important objective of retaining our skilled and experienced work force.

The government places a great deal of emphasis on encouraging and promoting its employees to develop their skills to their full potential. For many of our employees, this will mean undertaking programs of further study after they have entered the work force. I am pleased, therefore, to advise public servants and teachers that the government has approved the introduction of a program of study assistance for employees which is designed to support their efforts to achieve greater career opportunities through the study of relevant courses. We have decided that employees undertaking courses of study will be reimbursed for the cost of the Commonwealth imposed tax, the Higher Education Contribution Scheme, which was introduced at the beginning of this year. The reimbursement of these costs will apply for courses undertaken by employees which have been approved by their chief executive officer and subject to satisfactory progress by the employee with the course of study. The course of study must be undertaken at the Northern Territory University, if our university offers that particular course.

Our aim with this incentive is to encourage and assist our employees to maintain and update their skills or to develop new skills which are appropriate to the needs of the Northern Territory. I believe that, in the long term, this approach will help to reduce our reliance on recruitment to meet the need for skills and knowledge which will be required in the future in the implementation of government programs. I believe that employees who are motivated to improve their level of skill or education should be assisted, and that workplace satisfaction will be greatly enhanced through this scheme. The particular approach we have taken will help, in a meaningful way, to underpin the development of a strong and viable tertiary education sector in the Northern Territory.

The second incentive which we have decided to introduce, which again seeks to enhance staff development of our employees, is the Employee Development Scheme. This scheme will provide that employees in nominated categories are eligible to undertake an appropriate professional improvement program after a qualifying period of service with the Northern Territory government. The opportunity will be provided for employees to undertake relevant professional development programs of up to 3 months duration, on full salary, after 7 years of continuous service. This is not a variation of long service leave. It will not be an automatic entitlement available to all employees and it is not a 3-month paid holiday. It is an opportunity for people to improve their qualifications and skills through particular courses of study or to gain relevant experience outside their day-to-day workplace. In many areas, it is inevitable that people working in the Territory will become somewhat isolated from the mainstream of their professional activity and this scheme is designed to provide employees with the opportunity to undertake relatively intensive skill or knowledge update programs.

The government has decided to amend the long service leave entitlement arrangements to provide a worthwhile incentive for public servants and teachers to remain longer in Northern Territory government employment. We



have decided to provide access to some long service leave benefits after 7 years of service instead of the current minimum 10 years of service. Public service statistics show us that termination rates in the public service are particularly high during the first 5 years of service. We believe that offering to employees earlier access to long service leave benefits will help encourage many of those who might otherwise contemplate leaving the Territory to remain in the service longer. It is not the government's intention to make long service leave benefits available on a straight pro rata basis. We have decided, under this scheme, that an employee who resigns after 7 years service will be entitled to 22½ days of long service leave. After 8 years, an employee will be entitled to 45 days, after 9 years, the entitlement will be 67½ days and, after 10 years, the full current benefit of 90 days.

Providing access to long service leave earlier than the existing 10 years of service will bring the Northern Territory into line with the practice in most state public services and more in line with most arrangements in the private sector. We have provided these significant increases in pro rata benefits for each additional year of service as an incentive to employees to remain in Territory government employment. I consider this to be a sensible and reasonable approach.

The government has decided also to amend the current arrangements in relation to superannuation to encourage former public service employees to rejoin the public service at some future time. The portability provisions of the Northern Territory Superannuation Act will be changed to allow former members of the Northern Territory Government Public Service and Statutory Authorities Superannuation Scheme to regain access to employer-financed benefits if they rejoin the scheme within 12 months. In effect, this proposal offers former employees the chance to buy back employer contributions from a previous period of membership in the NTGPAS Scheme. In effect, the break in membership, provided it is not more than 12 months, will be treated as if it were a period of non-contributory leave for superannuation purposes. Clearly, this change will provide a significant incentive for people who have left government employment to rejoin.

I would ask honourable members to consider very carefully these general incentives which are to apply to all members of the Northern Territory Public Service and the Northern Territory Teaching Service. On top of the additional wages and salaries resulting from award restructuring negotiations, they constitute a package of measures specifically directed towards encouraging our employees to remain within the service and to improve their skills and training with a view to an enhanced career path. The costs are significant, but so too should be the rewards. A more highly-skilled and committed public service will contribute very substantially to the maintenance of the highest possible standards of service delivery in the Northern Territory, and that should be supported by all Territorians.

I turn now to a number of specific incentives which the government has approved for public servants and teachers living in the more remote parts of the Northern Territory. People working in remote areas face particular problems and often labour under extraordinarily difficult conditions. They face the rigours of isolation and the lack of access to many of the facilities which people in the larger towns simply take for granted. Their work is often frustrating, and the demands made of individuals and families are extremely severe. If we expect and require people to work in difficult circumstances, then we need to acknowledge the problems they face and to provide support in ways directed towards easing those problems.

The government has had 2 aspects in mind in developing a remote area package. We have tried to identify ways in which we could help to meet some of the additional costs involved in living in remote communities, and we have sought to develop additional incentives for employees to accept remote locality postings and to stay for longer periods at these locations. Already, the government provides a range of incentives for employees in remote locations. I will not repeat these now. I simply note that the incentives which I am outlining here today are in addition to these existing benefits.

The government has decided to introduce a remote areas service rental rebate scheme. For employees living and working in remote areas, a rental rebate will be paid annually at the end of 12 months service. The rebate will be from 50% to 100% of rental costs, depending on the degree of remoteness of the location concerned. Under current Commonwealth taxation requirements, it seems likely that some taxation liability, probably fringe benefits tax, will apply to this scheme. I want to make it clear to all employees that the government will bear the taxation component and the benefit will be net of tax in the hands of employees. The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government will provide further details in his remarks. This is a major incentive and I believe the benefits are obvious. It will provide an encouragement to employees to undertake remote area service and it will encourage the retention of staff in remote locations, an issue which is of particular concern to the government and to the communities affected.

The government has decided also to improve the arrangements which apply to the Fares Out of Isolated Localities Scheme (FOILS). Employees working in isolated communities are presently entitled to 3 fares out of those communities every 2 years, either to Alice Springs or Darwin, whichever is closer. We have now decided to provide employees with a payment equivalent to the accommodation component of 3 days travelling allowance which may be taken in conjunction with each FOILS entitlement. While I believe the FOILS entitlement is a very worthwhile and much appreciated benefit, there are still potentially significant costs to employees in taking advantage of the scheme in the form of accommodation costs in Darwin and Alice Springs. The government has decided that it would be appropriate to assist employees with these costs. The accommodation component of travelling allowance is currently \$67 per night away from home.

The government has decided that special study leave will be provided to allow public service and Northern Territory Teaching Service employees working in remote locations to have access to full-time study at the Northern Territory University for up to 2 semesters. In special circumstances, where it is judged appropriate, this time may also be utilised for study of priority languages or for release to industry. Access to this study leave will be determined by a point system under which points will be gained for the number of years service and the degree of remoteness of the location concerned. This special study leave will be in addition to any existing full-time study provisions.

All employees located in remote areas are required to attend professional development activities in major town centres from time to time. These may be staff conferences, seminars, training programs or the like. Obviously, these activities are essential for the employees concerned, but they can create difficulties for the families of employees who may be obliged to accompany the employee at some considerable cost to the family. Therefore, the government has decided that it would be appropriate to meet the travelling costs of families once per year, when employees are attending such professional development activities.

One of the concerns which has been expressed to the government in relation to remote location employment is the additional costs that are sometimes incurred in relation to household insurance premiums. The government has decided, therefore, that it would be appropriate to assist employees in remote localities by meeting the extra cost of these higher household insurance premiums where these result from the remoteness of the location. In any situation where the insurance premium paid for household contents exceeds the premium cost for the same item in the nearest major urban centre, the difference will be reimbursed to the employee.

This package of general and remote area incentives is the outcome of the most comprehensive review of recruitment and retention needs in the Northern Territory Public Service undertaken for many years, and probably is the most significant and positive package to be offered to the government's employees since self-government. I believe that it is both responsive and responsible. It is responsive to the needs of our employees and responsible in terms of our ability to meet those needs, recognising that we face and will continue to face severe budgetary restraints.

Mr Speaker, I would expect all honourable members to support the measures that I have just outlined and I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, quite clearly from this statement the government is reaping what it sowed 2 years ago when it unilaterally took away important conditions of service that applied to public servants. Honourable members opposite were advised at the time, by myself and by the unions, that they were inviting by those actions a situation whereby it would be increasingly difficult to attract staff and increasingly difficult to hold staff. The statement today is an indication that that is in fact the case. Over the last few years, particularly in the professional areas, it has become increasingly difficult for the government to attract staff to the Northern Territory and increasingly difficult to keep staff in the Northern Territory.

The reason dates back to 1987, not simply because of the conditions that were taken away at that time - and that was important - but also, and equally importantly, because of the attitude that the government displayed at the time towards the public servants of the Northern Territory. It was an attitude of arrogance, of contempt for the needs of public servants in the Northern Territory and contempt for the role that public servants play in this community. That subject has not been addressed in this package. Certain elements to improve the lot of individual public servants can be pieced together, and I have no problem with most of the elements that have been put together but, overall, it does not amount to an impressive attempt to overcome the problems that have been identified: the need to slow down the exit rate and to increase the number and quality of applicants for jobs in the Northern Territory.

More importantly, this government has not come to grips with the severe problems that exist with the public service. We have seen salaries and conditions of service squeezed. We have seen the growing politicisation of the public service and the lack of direction offered by this government. The morale of public servants will not improve and the retention rate will not improve until there is a government in the Northern Territory that has a clear sense of direction, that it can communicate clearly to the public service, and a government that will allow public servants get on with the job rather than interfering with them on a daily basis.

Let me address this package specifically. The problem is that we really do not know why public servants leave the Northern Territory because I am advised that no comprehensive study has been made of the reasons. Public servants are asked to fill out exit forms, and there must be a huge pile of them, but no one has been given the job over the last 2 or 3 years of talking to public servants and determining the real reasons for which they are leaving, not those they put on the exit forms. Until ...

Mr Perron: Why should they tell you if they will not write it down?

Mr SMITH: That is right. Why should they tell you fellows? That is a very good point. The reason they will not is because they know that you people operate such a system that, if they ever wanted to return to the Northern Territory, the reasons given on the exit form would be used against them. That is the reason why they do not necessarily give their real reasons on the exit forms.

Subject to a proper survey being done of this, it is probable that there are a couple of major reasons why people leave. I am talking specifically about public servants, particularly teachers, who serve in isolated areas. One factor is that, too often, they have the feeling that they have been forgotten and that their needs have been ignored. That is something that does not require money to resolve. It requires quite simply that more care and attention be given to those people and to their needs.

Secondly, currently in the Northern Territory, some people serving in isolated areas have to use their savings to stay there. In other words, the salaries and conditions that we are providing to those people in isolated areas are insufficient. To survive and to do their job there, they have had to utilise their savings. I know that the Minister for Education is aware of that matter, and probably many other ministers are as well. I would like the ministers opposite to tell us where, in this package, any assistance is provided for those people in remote locations who are on the lower income levels of the Northern Territory Public Service. They are the people whom we send out to do the hardest jobs in the Northern Territory. How will they receive any real financial assistance from this package?

In Western Australia, single teachers in remote communities receive an allowance of \$4000 to \$5000 and married teachers receive much the same. In South Australia, single teachers receive between \$5000 and \$7500 and married teachers receive between \$5900 and \$7500. That is additional to their basic salary to compensate them for the additional costs incurred while serving in remote communities. Until the government comes to grips with that, it will not fool those people by offering all these sideshows. The government has to address the main problem. How can those people live properly and how can they save for their future? That is a prime reason why many of them go there. Until the government comes to grips with that, it will not resolve the very real problems involved in retaining teachers. It is extremely significant that the Australian Teachers Federation survey of teachers in isolated schools shows quite clearly that the length of stay of teachers in isolated schools in the Northern Territory is significantly less than the length of stay of teachers in isolated schools in other parts of Australia. That is the significant problem that this government has not addressed in this package.

As I have said, basically this package has missed the point. It will not stop people leaving the Northern Territory and it will not attract people to work in the Northern Territory. We have to ask ourselves a very basic question: if you were a teacher at a time of teacher shortage right across

Australia, what is there in this package that would attract you to serve in the Northern Territory? I would like the Minister for Education to address that. What is there in this package that will attract teachers to the Northern Territory? Until the government comes to grips with that basic question, until it puts in place a system that is fair and rewards people who work in isolated communities, it will not attract the people whom we need in the Northern Territory.

Another significant point is that the Chief Minister provided no costings, and no guidelines as to whom might be eligible under these brand new proposals. We do not know to how many people the study assistance program will be extended. We do not know how many people the Employee Development Scheme will be extended to. We do not know what sort of limits will apply to the superannuation proposal. Those details are not spelt out. Until they are spelt out, public servants will be somewhat suspicious. There is not much point in saying that there will be a study assistance scheme if people are to be knocked back. There is not much point in having an employee development scheme if only a lucky few are to be eligible. Such details should have been spelt out. Target figures should have been put in place so that public servants have a realistic idea of their chances of obtaining this assistance. Might I say, Mr Speaker, that the assistance is positive and is welcomed by this side of the House. It would have been much better, however, if public servants had been given a realistic idea of their chances of obtaining this particular type of assistance.

We come then to the question of remote areas and the definition of 'remote areas'. The Chief Minister was very silent on that matter. I hope that the Minister for Education intends to address the question of whether teachers and public servants who reside in Nhulunbuy live in a designated remote area. I hope also that he will state specifically which of these incentives apply to Nhulunbuy because, if he does not, he will have a major industrial dispute on his hands.

Mr McCarthy: They all apply to Nhulunbuy.

Mr SMITH: The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government says that all of the remote area concessions apply to Nhulunbuy.

Mr McCarthy: All of the remote area concessions apply to Nhulunbuy.

Mr SMITH: They all apply to Nhulunbuy, including the freight perishables concession which public servants in Nhulunbuy do not receive currently and the remote area air fare entitlements which they do not receive currently. All of those concessions apply to the people of Nhulunbuy. We have that on the authority of the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government. That is good news indeed. Let us hope that the Minister for Education has the same opinion because public servants in Nhulunbuy, including teachers, certainly do not have access to those concessions at present. There are some key points which someone on the government side of the House has to address. What is the definition of a 'remote area' in the Northern Territory? Who is eligible for the benefits outlined in the remote areas package?

The Rental Rebate Scheme, limited as it is, is welcome. However, it should not be forgotten that most people in the remote areas pay a rental of \$15 per week at present and therefore the Rental Rebate Scheme will have a very limited impact on them. If, by some miracle - and I understand from the Minister for Labour, Administrative Service and Local Government that this is the case - the Rental Rebate Scheme has been expanded to Nhulunbuy, that will

provide a magnificent incentive for public servants and teachers in that town. I am pleased that, according to the minister's own words, those people will now have access to that Rental Rebate Scheme. If I were the member for Nhulunbuy, I would get on the phone immediately and tell people in Nhulunbuy that the minister has advised this House that all of the remote area schemes will apply to them. That is a magnificent breakthrough, and the government has my congratulations.

It is unfortunate that this announcement could not have been made 6 months before people in Nhulunbuy, particularly teachers at the Nhulunbuy High School, voted with their feet and said that they would not stay there any longer. If those incentives had been put in place 6 months ago, we would not have had a situation in which 14 out of 23 teachers at Nhulunbuy High School are leaving. That is the other problem with this package. It has come too late in the year to keep key workers in our isolated communities. Of course, that was a purposeful decision by this government. There is very little in this package which will require any government expenditure whatsoever during this financial year. The only area which will incur any cost at all during the next 7 months will be when public servants and teachers take advantage of the FOIL Scheme. The government has put forward a no-cost package, and we all know ...

Mr Reed: So you would like us to wait another 6 months?

Mr SMITH: For the benefit of the Minister for Correctional Services, who cannot even read his office mail, the program should have been put in place 6 months ago so that teachers who are now leaving places like Katherine and Nhulunbuy would have had an extra incentive to stay. That is the point, Mr Speaker. It is too little and too late.

Let us look at a key area which has not been mentioned at all - housing. In terms of attracting people to and keeping them in remote communities, housing is probably the single most important factor. We all know that the Northern Territory government has not kept up with the demand for proper public service housing in remote communities. It still expects people to live in silver bullets and to pay rent for the privilege. The member for Stuart knows families consisting of a husband, wife and up to 5 kids who are expected to live in silver bullets and to pay rent for the privilege. Where are the housing initiatives? Where is the commitment from the Northern Territory government to provide incentives, in the form of adequate housing, to encourage people to live in remote communities? Where is the commitment from the Northern Territory government to put in place a program to get rid of silver bullets?

My colleague informed me this morning that public servants in Western Australia who are required to live in inadequate accommodation, such as silver bullets, are actually paid to do so by the relevant government authority. That occurs because the Western Australian government recognises that it has a commitment to provide adequate housing to its employees. When it does not meet that commitment, it is prepared to compensate them, but not so this government. In a package which supposedly provides conditions to attract and keep people in the Northern Territory, there is not one comment about creating satisfactory housing conditions for people in remote areas. That is a complete and utter indictment of this government. It can issue all the little packages it likes but, if it is not prepared to tackle the 2 important issues for people in remote areas - proper remuneration so that they do not have to dip into their own savings to stay there, and proper housing - it has not come to grips with the problem. That is the unfortunate aspect of this whole package. The government has not come to grips with the problem.

There is no doubt that the announced incentives are welcome. They are better than no incentives at all. There is no doubt that, in the minds of public servants, the incentives will not be sufficient to redress the blow to their living standards which they suffered in 1987. There is no doubt that the incentives will not be successful in improving retention rates and attracting more teachers and public servants to the Northern Territory. Once again, the government has failed to come to grips with problems in a meaningful way. It has failed to put in place a package which addresses those problems. Indeed, it has concentrated on a package which will entail a minimum cost, and a cost which will not occur this financial year. It has failed dismally to put in place in time this year any sort of incentive program that might have had half a chance of keeping people in their remote locations a little longer.

Having been critical, may I say again that I welcome the commitment from the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government that he has listened and his colleagues have listened to the legitimate demands of people in Nhulunbuy and that the remote areas scheme has been extended to Nhulunbuy and that, in future, they will be entitled to insurance costs, to special study leave, to professional development family costs and to benefits under the Rental Rebate Scheme and FOILS. That is a good package. That is a very good package.

Mr Reed: Not a bad package, is it? It is all there.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries will remain silent.

Mr SMITH: That is a very good package, and I congratulate the government on extending that to the members of the public service and the teaching service in Nhulunbuy. In my judgment, that has a real chance indeed of improving the retention rates in Nhulunbuy in the future. Unfortunately, it does not do anything for the public servants, particularly the teachers, who have already given in their notice, but certainly the people of Nhulunbuy can be pleased that this government has taken on their concerns about the quality of education and other public service opportunities offered to them. They can be pleased that these remote area conditions will be extended to Nhulunbuy, and that is simply terrific.

As for the package as a whole, as I have said, it does not go anywhere near to addressing the genuine concerns of people working in isolated communities. It will not work because the government has forgotten those 2 basic elements: proper remuneration to compensate them for the cost of living in those areas and proper housing. It will not work and, this time next year, we will be looking at another package of conditions and, hopefully, it will be a more realistic package.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the statement of the Chief Minister, a statement which, contrary to the view of the Leader of the Opposition, does provide very real incentives that will assist in the recruitment to and the retention of employees in the Northern Territory Public Service. During my response, I will talk about some of the comments that the Leader of the Opposition has made. His lack of knowledge on some aspects is really astounding, particularly as to what is currently available to people in places such as Nhulunbuy.

The package of recruitment and retention incentives outlined by the Chief Minister will do much to help attract and keep staff in the Northern Territory Public Service, but it is important that we do not consider the package in isolation. It is just one component, albeit an important one, of a total strategy this government is putting in place in order to recruit and retain staff, to improve the quality of delivery of services to the people of the Northern Territory, to encourage and facilitate the development of our public servants and to ensure that measures put in place are responsive to the changing environment of modern public sector administration.

Mr Leo: Is Nhulunbuy a remote area?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, they cannot wait.

Importantly, the strategy will ensure that our public service employees are adequately remunerated for the duties they are asked to perform. This government's task of recruiting staff - and, indeed, people in general - to the Northern Territory is not made easy by our relative isolation from the rest of Australia.

Mr Leo: Is Nhulunbuy a remote area?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, we have been working extremely hard for many years to provide ...

Mr Leo: He would not know the difference.

Mr McCARTHY: If you would wait, you will find out.

We have been working to provide community infrastructure which will take the Territory into the 21st century. This government has achieved remarkable results in the 11½ years since self-government. We have been able to provide Territorians with a range of facilities, including the Northern Territory University, a high standard of health services, some of Australia's best roads and highways, major cultural facilities, the Alice Springs to Darwin gas pipeline, world-class tourist infrastructure, and some of the world's best national parks.

Despite everything we have been able to achieve in the major centres, many of our communities are so small and so isolated that the provision of full-scale urban services is neither practicable nor achievable. The Chief Minister has outlined a package of measures to compensate for the disabilities facing employees working in remote localities. We are coming down now to answering the question of the member for Nhulunbuy and, in fact, correcting the mistakes of the Leader of the Opposition who does not know what he is talking about with regard to FOILS. I will not dwell too much on the exact nature of those incentives, as the Chief Minister has already explained them, but I would like to pick up some of the points he raised. The Chief Minister talked about degrees of remoteness and I would like to speak for a minute about how we classify communities into different categories.

The Department of Labour and Administrative Services developed a system by which to identify the extent of remoteness of all localities in which we require public servants and teachers to work. Some of the factors contributing to the classification process are radio and television reception, postal services, telephone communication, banking facilities, availability of air services, access to shopping, local cost of living and road links to major centres. Following the assessment of these factors, communities are



classified into 5 grades of remoteness which will be used to identify the degree of additional incentives that employees in those localities will be offered. As circumstances in different communities change, our point scoring system for identifying the degree of their remoteness must change also. Our current information is being updated but, to give members an idea of how this system works, I will outline some examples based on a survey conducted by the department in 1988. That is how recent this information is. It was developed in 1988 and we are now going through it to pick up any changes that have been made since.

For instance, both Nhulunbuy and Yulara have good access to shopping, police, communications and recreational facilities, but both communities are isolated in terms of travel to a major urban centre. For this reason, they are placed in category 1 for remoteness, meaning they are remote communities, but comparatively less remote than others. If I can pick up the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition previously with regard to the FOILS, Nhulunbuy is entitled currently to benefits under the FOILS. I am rather surprised that the Leader of the Opposition is not aware of that. Therefore, they will be entitled to the extra \$67 per overnight stay when using those entitlements. With regard to category 1 remoteness, for the entitlement of reimbursement of rental, they will receive a 60% rebate on rent. That is a very significant rebate, and it increases up to 100% depending on the category of remoteness beyond that.

At the other end of the scale, Umbakumba and Numbulwar score highly on all the remote factors and therefore fall into category 5. Therefore, people employed there would receive 100% rebate. Communities such as Ali Curung and Palumpa have good access to communication facilities, but shopping and postal facilities are limited and therefore they score in the middle range at category 3. Every community in which the government places staff has been categorised by this method using a point score system. In identifying areas of need among public servants, this government has not confined itself to those employees in remote localities. Developing incentives to attract and keep employees in the Territory is an ongoing process. We are always conscious of the need to address the issue of staff retention and we are continually putting measures into place to achieve this.

On 14 August this year, I announced the government's decision to allow employees to cash in their air fares. This is a progressive initiative enabling employees maximum flexibility in the use of their air fare entitlement. If employees want extra cash for Christmas or any other reason, they can now obtain it by turning an accrued air fare into cash. In addition to the cash value of the air fare, the government makes a significant contribution to cover the marginal rate of tax payable on that additional income. This lends credence to my statement that these are ongoing packages that we are working out and improving on as we look at more and more details. This is not only an incentive to employees. There is a potential additional spin-off to Territory business in that cashed-up air fares are more likely to be spent in the Territory.

On 16 June this year, I removed a practice which the Territory inherited from the Commonwealth and which discriminated against female compulsory transferees. Previously, unlike their male colleagues, these employees were not given the benefit of air fare entitlements for their dependants. I saw this as being unjustifiably discriminatory and directed that the by-law be amended to provide air fares to the dependants of these employees.

These are some of the measures that we have put in place to improve the lot of our employees, but this government is not content to rest there. In addition to the comprehensive and very attractive incentives package announced by the Chief Minister, and the further measures that I have addressed already, this government is putting in place 3 significant initiatives which will make revolutionary improvements to the Northern Territory Public Service. These initiatives encompass award restructuring, staff development and improved job classification systems. None of these initiatives can be considered in isolation. They are intertwined and each is aimed at the same end result: producing a better trained and therefore stronger and more effective public service for the Territory.

Award restructuring will be a major driving force in both private and public sector employment in the 1990s. For years, this government and private sector employers have been advocating that wage increases can only be forthcoming following improvements in productivity - that is, we cannot afford to continue paying our workers more and more for the same output. Thankfully, the realisation of this fact has eventually dawned on the federal government, the trade union movement and the Industrial Relations Commission, and we now have the beginnings of a wage system which addresses the issue of productivity improvements in the context of wage increases.

The first attempt by the nation's wage system to come to grips with the concept of productivity was the so-called second tier 4% increase in 1987. Since then, the concept has been further refined to produce what is now known as award restructuring. In a nutshell, award restructuring means producing more by working smarter. It involves retraining the work force so that it becomes more skilled and adopting new and more efficient technologies. It links better work and better skills with better pay, encouraging employees to advance through their professions. The incentives put forward by the Chief Minister today reflect that need.

I am pleased to say that this is happening with a high degree of cooperation between the government and public sector unions. As a result of that cooperation, all government employees will receive the first half of the national wage increase - that is 3% - from 7 December this year. The second 3% may be payable in June 1990, provided the Industrial Relations Commission is satisfied that award restructuring proposals have been put in place which will lead to a more efficient work force. To date, there have been successful negotiations on award restructuring which we believe will achieve this outcome. Those negotiations cover areas such as the streamlining of part-time employment, consolidated service award conditions, variations to the arrangements for temporary promotions, contract employment, rationalisation of allowances and a review of 38-hour-week agreements.

The point we have reached has been possible only because of the air of cooperation which exists between this government and public sector unions. A further example of that cooperation is the recent reformation of the Public Service Consultative Council after 7 years in abeyance. A little over a month ago, it gave me great pleasure to open the first meeting of the reconstituted council here in Darwin. This forum will ensure that the government and its employees are able to tackle problems, ideas and the future together.

I want to turn now to the important area of job reclassification. Honourable members would no doubt have heard of the Cullen Egan Dell survey which has been under way since earlier this year. Cullen Egan Dell is a management consultative firm which specialises in the field of job evaluation and classification systems. The firm has been contracted by the Territory

government to survey a range of jobs across the public service and evaluate each one on a point score system. Cullen Egan Dell commenced this survey earlier this year, initially by developing detailed job descriptions of 400 positions within the service in the professional, executive, administrative and technical occupational groupings. These job descriptions detail each of those positions under such headings as the level of complexity of the work performed, supervisory responsibilities, financial responsibilities and the like. The 400 positions, which are referred to as benchmark positions, will be used to classify some 6700 jobs in those occupational groupings that I have mentioned.

Each position will be classified according to its point score and compared against the relative benchmark position. In effect, the Cullen Egan Dell system assesses jobs on a scientific basis rather than a subjective one. The process will ensure equity in classification across the service. That means that jobs of equal complexity, in terms of tasks performed, will be classified at the same level and therefore remunerated at the same level, regardless of which department they are located in.

I am very excited about this important initiative and, whilst some heartache has been experienced in the initial stages, I am positive that, once the system is in place, it will be clear that it will provide a fair deal for all our employees. As the Chief Minister said in his statement, this government places a great deal of importance on encouraging and facilitating the development of our employees to their full potential. To do otherwise would be to deny ourselves the full use of our most important resource, and that is our people. We must consistently review and improve the opportunities available to those staff in order to provide the best possible service to Territorians.

This government already commits significant resources to this area of staff development and training. In 1988-89, over \$6m was spent. That equated to 2.16% of the total salaries budget, well beyond the figure the federal government is now recommending that employers spend on the development of their staff. However, as a result of a recent survey into staff development undertaken by my department, Cabinet has recognised that there is a need to change the focus of that expenditure. We believe that the needs of the service in the area of staff development have changed over the years and the time has come to sit down and rethink the direction in which we are heading. As a result, we have adopted a strategic approach to training and development across public sector employment. This strategic approach involves a number of elements. These include the implementation of training and development programs in each department, and the development of a relevant and accurate database of training information.

The Department of Labor and Administrative Services will act as a coordination point for training and development across the service. This does not mean that the training role will be taken away from individual departments, where it rightly sits. Instead, my department will provide a consultancy service to assist departments with their training requirements. In order to do this, my department has created a senior position to undertake this coordination task. In addition, this position will handle liaison for the development of programs common to more than one department. One of these will be specialist training for staff development officers. To underline this government's commitment to staff development and to ensure ongoing scrutiny and review of processes in this field, Cabinet has directed that staff development programs be the subject of a specific report within departmental annual reports.

Mr Speaker, before I sit down, I would like to address some of the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition and also to right a comment that I made previously with regard to the percentage available to Nhulunbuy in the category 1 area. In fact, the Rental Rebate Scheme starts at 50% and not 60%. That was an error that I made in making that comment, and it has been brought to my notice.

I would like to take umbrage at some of the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition who claims that, throughout the Northern Territory, it is difficult to recruit and retain employees. In certain areas, that is true, certainly in respect of some professional and technical fields. At times, it is difficult to recruit to remote localities. Prior to 1987, we had a set of conditions of service that were available across the board, regardless of where one sat and regardless of the importance of the position or the remoteness of the job. The new initiatives of the government, announced by the Chief Minister this morning, will address some of those areas that were affected adversely in 1987.

The government has no intention of bringing back such things as across-the-board air fares which were an anomaly in the Northern Territory and which could no longer be considered appropriate in a place which, whilst remaining remote, offers quite reasonable access to holiday destinations and places in which to get away from it all. The requirement is no longer what it was many years ago. Of course, the cost of those benefits was very heavy. The public service was obliged to provide air fares to its employees, regardless of where they were recruited from. An employee recruited from Nguu on Bathurst Island was entitled to an air fare to a capital city of his or her choice. Such conditions are quite inappropriate, particularly when no other government in Australia provides them.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about exit forms and exit interviews. I would like exit interviews to occur, although they are very difficult to obtain at times. We need to build a database relating to the exit of public servants. However, there is no indication that exit interviews would have a great impact. Apart from professionals and people in technical occupations who are being offered enormous salaries to go elsewhere, it is not difficult to recruit people locally to the administrative categories of the public service. It is only when we get into middle management, professional and technical areas and remote areas, that we have difficulties. These incentives will address those difficulties. I strongly support the Chief Minister's statement.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, what I would appreciate is some actual figures from the Chief Minister in his reply. For example, what will this package mean to a public servant living in Nhulunbuy? I heard the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government say that there had been an increase in the rental rebate from something like 50% to 60%, if I understand it correctly.

Mr McCarthy: No, in actual fact, it is 50%.

Mr LEO: It is at 50% now. There is no increase there. The Gove allowance has been in place for quite some time. It is about 12 months old.

What I would appreciate from the Chief Minister in reply is what specifically the average public servant can expect to gain from this package in cash terms and what it will mean either annually or in his fortnightly pay packet. I would prefer to obtain this information, category by category, for

the 5 remote area categories. I want to know what this means in cash terms for the public servants who are affected by these initiatives. I would like to know also what it will cost. I would appreciate some idea of what the cost of this will be. I realise that the government is operating under very stringent budgetary conditions. That was made clear when the Treasurer introduced the 1989-90 budget. Since then, we have felt the effects of the pilots' dispute. Obviously, that has cost us a great deal of money in terms of subsidies that must go to the Sheratons and Yulara, and it must have also had an effect on our revenue-raising capacity. Certainly, there must have been a decrease in revenue. Other activities within the Northern Territory have perhaps had a very dramatic effect on the Northern Territory budget too. I appreciate that the Treasurer has an \$11m advance to take into account such contingencies as unexpected expenses and inflation ...

Mr Perron interjecting.

Mr LEO: ... but I would appreciate the Treasurer providing a costing so that we know what we are looking at.

It is certainly a line item in the budget and we need some figures, otherwise we will find ourselves again in the situation we found ourselves in 2 years ago when, because of having to pay for things which we could not afford, conditions of service of public servants were cut. As was predicted at the time, the effects of those cuts have been reflected in difficulties in recruiting staff to the Northern Territory Public Service and in the rate at which public servants have left the Northern Territory. Both of those things have happened. I would hate to see a repeat of that exercise in another 2 years time because of a decision in this House that perhaps the incentives are financially insupportable in some way. When the Chief Minister and Treasurer speaks in reply, I would appreciate him providing those costings as well as examples of individual benefits in typical situations in which public servants find themselves throughout the Northern Territory.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I have a great deal of pleasure today in supporting the Chief Minister's statement. It has taken the government a long time to reach this position where it is able to present, both to public servants and to teachers, a package which will definitely bring about an improvement in their conditions of service and their salaries generally.

May I start by stating that the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition this morning were indeed extraordinary. Not only did he fail to listen to what was being said by the Chief Minister, but he was less than honest in some of his own statements. He made some outlandish statements about the Northern Territory government. There is no doubt that the overall package addresses the question of providing more money in teachers' pay packets. The provision of school facilities and housing is being dealt with by both the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory governments, on a continuing basis, and the Leader of the Opposition knows that.

First of all, I will touch on the matter of additional allowances. The Leader of the Opposition said that teachers in isolated communities in South Australia would receive a salary allowance increase of between \$5000 and \$7000. That is not correct. He was talking about the overall South Australian package in which the increase could be as high as \$7000. The fact is that, in remote area Aboriginal schools throughout Australia, a salary allowance is paid. The allowance in the Northern Territory is about \$1500 whilst the highest amount paid in any state is \$1100. In South Australia, teachers do not receive a salary allowance increase of between \$5000

and \$7000. The Leader of the Opposition has made up a composite average situation and a teacher in a similar position in the Northern Territory would get over \$10 000. In the package that we are presenting, such a teacher would receive at least the \$7290 and, on top of that, the existing benefits that are to hand. Let me mention also, in relation to South Australia, that there would be very few schools in isolated areas there, and I emphasise again that we are talking about a total package here. Probably, in the South Australian situation, it would be available to 1 or 2 teachers only.

Whilst we are talking about the comparison of the Northern Territory package of incentives to that of South Australia, I would like to go through a few items to indicate very clearly where we stand. In the Northern Territory, when we talk about priority transfer schemes, the schemes in the Northern Territory and South Australia both depend on the point system related to degrees of remoteness. In study assistance, the Northern Territory scheme is much more favourable. In staff development, the existing level of in-service training for Northern Territory teachers is superior to that available in South Australia. In relation to study leave, except for a small number of remote Aboriginal schools in South Australia, the Northern Territory scheme is slightly more favourable. As for incremental jumps, the Northern Territory scheme is much more comprehensive, covering all areas. The South Australian scheme is less favourable, taking the form of an allowance after 4 years, which is removed after transfer to a city. When we talk about teaching service scholarships, overall the Northern Territory scheme is far superior. The Northern Territory scheme provides also for 2 years in a major centre before a voluntary transfer to an outback location and I note here that, in relation to the schemes that are being introduced in Queensland, their overall scheme is comparable but, when our incentive package is included, there is no doubt that ours is superior. The total package that we are offering in the Northern Territory is superior to that offered in South Australia and there is no doubt about that. I can say that this total awards and incentives package, if accepted by the Northern Territory Teachers Federation and the Industrial Relations Commission, will put the Northern Territory firmly back among the leaders in terms of salaries and conditions for teachers.

The Leader of the Opposition made what I term an incredibly irresponsible statement about the Northern Territory government, and it was the type of statement that we hear from the opposition from time to time. He said that, when people leave, they do not give the real reason for leaving, and that they will not do so because they have fears of repercussions. That is a nonsense, and it is a pity that we hear these comments from time to time because all they do is generate a perception in the community that, if people have given an honest answer to a question and that answer is not favourable to government, the government penalises those people in some way. That is a nonsense. Teachers do not leave simply because of a lack of incentives, and perhaps I should mention the reasons why some of the teachers have left Nhulunbuy, to give an example. There are many other reasons, and they do not relate only to conditions.

The Band 3 Secondary: the occupant of this position is transferring to Alice Springs to take up a senior position as the head of the new language centre; this transfer is at the request of the officer concerned. The Band 2 Secondary: the occupant of this position is resigning as a result of the transfer of her husband. The Band 1 position, Special Education: the occupant is leaving as a result of a spouse transfer, and already a replacement has been arranged. In another case, a husband and wife team, both teachers, wish to settle permanently in the Northern Territory and, as a result, they wish to purchase a home which they cannot do in Nhulunbuy.

Another husband and wife team, both teachers, wish to transfer because of the cost of living in Nhulunbuy. That is one couple that has raised that issue. One science teacher is transferring at own request to teach in an Aboriginal community. A home economics teacher is transferring because of her own personal and professional reasons. An art teacher is transferring on compassionate grounds. This officer has been in the Nhulunbuy community for several years.

Teaching staff transfers occur for a variety of reasons. As has been mentioned, these are mainly personal and professional and no one wants to see people being locked away in a community without being able to progress and advance in their profession. The incentives that are being offered as a result of government initiatives should help to make centres such as Nhulunbuy much more attractive financially to teachers. I raise that because it is important to note that teachers do not leave because of poor conditions. It is often ...

Mr Smith: Tell us what the new conditions are in Nhulunbuy.

Mr HARRIS: I have just made the comment, Mr Speaker. I will be covering the government package in detail.

The final point that was raised by the Leader of the Opposition was in relation to housing. I would like to touch on that before covering the main points of the package for teachers generally. The housing that is provided in the Northern Territory in remote communities is as good as that provided in states such as South Australia and Western Australia. The silver bullets are already being replaced progressively by permanent or relocatable accommodation. The silver bullets are an inheritance from the Commonwealth days and we are moving to improve houses. A number of houses have already been built at places such as Docker River. That program will continue.

In relation to housing, it is more than simply the expenditure of money. I am sure that members opposite have visited many of these communities. What is necessary is a community commitment to the buildings that are being constructed. One of the major concerns that confronts me in respect of housing and the schools in Aboriginal communities relates to the community attitude. Probably the member for Stuart will be aware that a wonderful brick house that was constructed at Jay Creek is just a shell. We must be responsible in relation to expenditure. That is the difference between the opposition and this government. We are interested not only in ensuring that we provide necessary accommodation, but also in ensuring that the dollars are spent responsibly and that the facilities will be protected. In a whole range of communities, there are examples of tremendous waste. Today, the Yuendumu supermarket, which cost over \$2m, is a concrete base with a roof over the top. We are building new houses in many communities, and that was raised by the opposition. It is very important to ensure that we are able to provide, on a progressive basis, appropriate housing for teachers in these remote communities.

Mr Speaker, I will table a document. I had it printed to enable it to be tabled during the course of this debate. There are 2 mistakes in it, and these have been indicated at the front. I indicate that all schools throughout the Territory should receive a copy of the document by Tuesday.

In its approach to the restructuring of teacher awards, the Northern Territory government has had 6 major objectives. Firstly, we aim to ensure the highest possible standard of teaching and educational leadership in

Territory schools and colleges and thus to improve school effectiveness, enhance the education of Territory children and increase the training opportunities for adults. Secondly, we wish to recognise, in salary and conditions of service awards, the significant social, economic and developmental role of teachers. Thirdly, we want to ensure that schools and TAFE centres in remote and difficult locations have the same availability of skilled and qualified teaching staff as those in other parts of the Northern Territory and the rest of Australia. Fourthly, we have to facilitate the recruitment of skilled teachers, and especially local Territorians, to our schools and colleges and to provide incentives for such teachers to remain in the Northern Territory. Fifthly, we aim to provide career paths for teachers which will allow those teachers who so desire to remain as teachers rather than become administrators. Sixthly, we wish to provide opportunities for teachers to improve and update their professional skills and qualifications.

To demonstrate its commitment to these objectives, the government intends to propose to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, in its award restructuring submission, that salary rates for Territory teachers should be comparable with those of teachers of equivalent status in other Australian states and territories. In addition, the government will propose to the commission a range of incentives which will improve significantly the Territory's ability to recruit and retain teachers. The government proposes major changes to the classification of teaching and school-based promotion positions, and to salary scales of teachers.

The new classification of salary scales includes: general incentives for all Territory teachers, such as the collapsing of the existing category A, B and C salary scales to one scale resulting in a salary increase of more than 6% for category B and C staff; salary parity for staff in primary and secondary school promotion positions; an additional annual increment at the top of the teacher classification to be available to teachers with 3 or more years service in the Territory; and accelerated progression through the salary range, subject to satisfactory performance appraisal. In addition, the move to the new executive teaching classifications, coupled with the combining of the primary and secondary promotion position scales, will produce salary increases well in excess of 6% for many staff. For example, teachers in positions currently classified as Band 2 Primary will move from an existing salary of \$34 655 to \$38 461 - an increase of approximately 11%. Teachers in positions classified currently as Band 3 Primary will move from an existing salary of \$38 765 to between \$44 342 and \$50 589, depending on school size and other factors - an increase of between 14% and 30%. Teachers in positions currently classified as Band 4 Primary will move from an existing salary of \$46 160 to between \$48 971 and \$52 460, depending on school size and other factors - an increase of between 6% and 14%.

I should note that the salary figures that I have just mentioned, and indeed all of the details of our proposal, are subject to the full process of award restructuring to be applied by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. Already, the Chief Minister has outlined the general public sector incentive package. The following are the direct benefits to all members of the Northern Territory Teaching Service. Employees completing an approved course of study under existing guidelines for approved student status will be eligible, if successful, for reimbursement of the cost liability incurred under the Higher Education Contribution Scheme. Special provision will be made for teachers to apply for 3 months, after 7 years service, in order to undertake professional development. Such awards will be available on a competitive basis.



At this time, I might seek leave to table the remainder of my speech for incorporation in Hansard. I can keep going but, at the end of my time, I will be moving to incorporate the remainder in Hansard.

Mr Smith: I want to hear it.

Mr Ede: I want to hear it. I am supposed to reply. We will give you an extension of time.

Mr HARRIS: Well, that is fine. Thank you.

The Chief Minister has also detailed a number of incentives which will be of particular benefit to teaching service members living in remote localities. These measures are designed to attract teachers to and retain them in schools in remote locations, thus ensuring continuity of school staff and an increase in school effectiveness. In addition to the improvements and incentives that I have just outlined and those outlined by the Chief Minister, the full implementation of the enhanced Master Teacher Scheme and Senior Lecturer classification in TAFE will provide significant benefits for those highly-skilled classroom teachers who elect not to pursue a career path through the Executive Teacher or Lecturer classifications. The new salary scales proposed by the government will allow both school and TAFE personnel to be classified at comparable levels and to be the same at base entry salary and at certain Executive Teacher levels. In essence, the proposed structure will consist of 3 broad classifications for members of the teaching service. These are Teacher, Master Teacher and Executive Teacher. The classification of Teacher will cover those positions previously designated as Band 1 teacher in both school and technical and further education. The classification of Master Teacher will cover those positions of existing Master Teacher and the new positions developed in the enhanced Master Teacher Scheme announced in September 1989.

A new Executive Teacher classification will cover all those positions previously designated as Band 2, 3 and 4 and also office-based NTS positions designated Education Officer, Senior Education Officer, Principal Education Officer and Superintendent. If the proposed award is accepted by the commission, all such positions will be graded according to predetermined criteria into one of the 9 Executive Teacher levels. It will be proposed that there no longer be any distinction between primary and secondary Executive Teacher positions. As well, TAFE Executive Teachers will be placed within this classification. These proposed new gradings will take account of a range of issues such as staff responsibility, administrative responsibility, size of school, complexity of the educational environment of the school or position, whether the position is school or office-based and so on.

The proposed reorganisation of classifications and salary scales is a major move towards structural efficiency in its own right, and a significant step in enhancing rewards for teachers, productivity in the teaching service and the effectiveness of schools. The proposal will provide major improvements in the career planning, work satisfaction and remuneration prospects of teachers whilst, at the same time, allowing more efficient staffing of various schools and the office-based positions at more appropriate levels. The enhanced Master Teacher Scheme will contribute substantially to the standard of teaching in our schools by allowing outstanding teachers to remain in the classroom and to use their expertise to assist other teachers.

The government has always had the objective of encouraging local residents to join the teaching profession, and we believe that more young Territorians

will be attracted to teaching if they can begin their teaching career in a familiar environment. Accordingly, beginning teachers will be posted initially to urban and regional centres such as those down the track, where the population basis is stable and where access to services is adequate - for example, at Darwin, Jabiru, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs. The government will ensure that, in their first 2 years, these beginning teachers will be given access to staff development opportunities and will gain experience under the supervision of experienced staff. In addition, the government is encouraging the development of special courses to allow Territory teachers to upgrade their professional qualifications. These will include provision to retrain primary teachers for secondary positions, particularly those in subjects such as mathematics and science where there is a national shortage of qualified teachers.

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

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the honourable minister from completing his remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HARRIS (Education): I thank honourable members, Mr Speaker.

May I make the comment that trying to have primary teachers upgrade their qualifications is not an easy task. In fact, we have advertised and tried to encourage more primary teachers to become involved and to upgrade in the areas of major shortage in the Northern Territory. I would ask all members to encourage teachers to look at the possibility of upgrading to fill the important positions that we have available. It is important to us in the Territory that our teachers come from the Northern Territory so that we do not have to go overseas to recruit them.

As part of its overall approach, and in line with the August 1989 decision on structural efficiency handed down by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, the government will be seeking agreement with teachers representatives and the commission on a range of incentives aimed at increasing the productivity and effectiveness of teachers and ultimately producing improvements in the quality of education in our schools. In addressing the issue of structural efficiency, as defined by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, the government wishes to put on record that it well recognises that the majority of teachers work beyond the 36 hours and 45 minutes per week for the nominal 46 weeks per year which, under the current awards and agreement, is the time they may be required to attend school. In the spirit of structural efficiency and productivity, the government believes that it is in the interest of all to clarify and to make public the kind of activities teachers generally carry out in their day-to-day work.

Public awareness of these details should assist greatly in raising the public profile of and approval for the teaching profession. The government, in pursuing its major objectives of improving school effectiveness and enhancing the education of Territory children, holds that direct face-to-face teaching time must be maximised in our schools, including programmed sporting and cultural activities. Accordingly, it intends to propose that, wherever possible, activities other than direct teaching take place outside this time. This may include the voluntary utilisation of stand-down periods for activities such as personal scholarship, attendance at approved professional development programs and the conduct of interstate and overseas school

excursions and sporting visits. The proposal will be developed further to include a number of other elements which I will now outline.

The government wishes to increase opportunities for all staff to gain better access to new provisions for study leave, professional development programs and a range of other incentives, such as assistance for families to accompany remote-area teachers on in-service activities in major Northern Territory centres. To this end, it is proposed that all future in-service and staff development activities will take place outside normal school teaching time unless specific approval is given. This will alleviate the problem of disruption to school and class programs and will reduce the considerable cost of providing replacement teachers caused by the scheduling of these activities during normal teaching time. The government intends to propose more flexible leave and stand-down arrangements for staff to reduce the disruption to teaching programs caused by current school start-up and enrolment procedures. It will propose that staffing arrangements be made as necessary to ensure that teaching commences on the first day of each term.

It is intended that schools will have appropriate staff available for 46 weeks per year to assist the public with course inquiries, enrolment procedures and counselling and to allow greater efficiency in school servicing and community access to school facilities. To ensure effective school management, teachers will be at school not less than 15 minutes before the first teaching period commences and will remain at school not less than 45 minutes after the last teaching period finishes.

In future, school excursions within the Northern Territory of more than 3 days duration will be approved to take place only during normal teaching time if it is clearly demonstrated that they are related to specific teaching programs. Interstate and overseas excursions generally take place only outside normal teaching times.

In an effort to be more responsive to industry and community needs, TAFE colleges will offer increased access to college facilities and courses through more flexible use of current non-teaching time. The current practice of the provision of pupil-free days is to be discontinued in the expectation that, in future, activities now conducted during these times will occur outside normal teaching times. Current arrangements for excursions of more than 3 days duration within the Northern Territory and for interstate and overseas excursions will also be examined. We will consider ways of reducing the excessive time spent on meetings and other in-service, non-teaching activities which occur at school, about which teachers often express concern. Existing practice and agreement on the school day will be formalised. These matters will be included in the policy of individual schools and, in particular, in individual action plans for school improvement.

The government intends that the incremental steps in the teacher grades should involve substantial opportunities for higher remuneration for teachers and, accordingly, proposes that progression should be subject to satisfactory performance appraisal as part of the regular school level supervisory process, with appropriate appeal or review provisions to ensure fair treatment.

It is noted that new legislation now facilitates the transfer of Northern Territory Teaching Service staff to Northern Territory Public Service positions and vice versa for qualified personnel when required. These procedures ensure the portability of accrued benefits between the 2 services. To facilitate more efficient and streamlined staffing processes in schools, the government also intends to propose that, in future, no person in the

Northern Territory Teaching Service may lodge an appeal against an appointment unless that person was an original applicant for the position. For similar reasons, it is proposed that the existing practice of holding positions open for staff on leave without pay will be discontinued.

Strict application of formula staffing has always been supported by the Northern Territory Teachers Federation, but problems related to enrolment fluctuations, which could result in transfer or voluntary demotion, have meant that many above-formula positions have remained in schools for a further 12 months to enable staff to apply for transfers or promotions, should they wish to, in the following annual promotion round. It is proposed that, from 1991, above-formula staff other than agreed special needs staff will not remain in schools beyond the end of the year in which the position is reclassified. This will be achieved by early identification of formula entitlements and streamlining of replacement procedures.

The government intends to negotiate a range of matters which are currently the subject of informal agreement and, where appropriate, to have these matters included in the new award. In addition, the government intends to negotiate a set of grievance and dispute settlement procedures. To help achieve its objectives, Northern Territory schools and TAFE centres, including those in remote and difficult locations, will have the same availability of school staff as those in urban centres throughout Australia. So that staff are encouraged to remain in the Territory, the government has proposed a range of initiatives to provide incentives to attract teachers to take up positions and to remain in our schools. These proposals apply to both the Northern Territory Public Service and the Northern Territory Teaching Service and have been detailed by the honourable Chief Minister. The proposals made by the Northern Territory government for the Northern Territory Teaching Service are extremely significant both in the process of award restructuring, which is taking place throughout the national work force, and in our efforts to improve school effectiveness and to enhance the education of Territory children. We believe that our proposals form a sound basis on which to take the Northern Territory Teaching Service into the 1990s.

The member for Nhulunbuy asked the Chief Minister to make more detail available in relation to certain matters mentioned in the statement. I believe that ministers will be providing that detail over a period of time. In answer to an interjection, he indicated that Nhulunbuy residents already receive a 50% concession on housing rents. This scheme provides a further 50% rebate to the employee on completion of each 12 months of continuous service in Nhulunbuy. I want to make it very clear that this is additional to the 50% that is already provided.

The proposals that have been put forward will be examined in detail by teachers throughout the Northern Territory. As I indicated, I will be making copies of the proposals available to all schools. They should receive those documents by Tuesday next week. Mr Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to support the Chief Minister's statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I think the document that has been circulated is very appropriately entitled 'Teaching in Tomorrow's Territory'. Unfortunately, the problems, as we have been outlining them in today's Territory, will remain because so much of this is too late. It is only a couple of weeks before the end of the school year.

Mr Coulter: Say something good about it.

Mr EDE: It is good quality paper.

Mr Speaker, on the basis of the information that has been available to them throughout the last semester, many teachers have decided already what they will do. It is unfortunate that it has taken so long for the government to begin to address the issues, despite the fact that it has known about the problems of schools in remote areas for quite some time because we have constantly drawn attention to them. Let us have a look at a few of the individual items. It is difficult to go into detail about the Minister for Education's speech because, unfortunately, he did not see fit to give us an advance copy even this morning so that we could examine some of the increases that he has proposed. It should be remembered that the proposal is to be submitted to the Industrial Relations Commission. Basically, it is a complete restructuring deal. On the one hand, various goodies will be advanced and, on the other hand, there are various work practices on which there is to be change or compromise.

From my quick look at it, and I have had very little time, teachers in promotion positions in primary schools, Bands 2, 3 and 4, have been increased from the primary to the secondary rate. In addition, they will receive the 6% increase. Certainly, that is quite an attractive financial package for those teachers. The question of the offsets that will be required of them is not something that I will go into at this stage. I think that we should examine those after we have had rather more time to assess them. I am very concerned when I find small 1 or 2 teacher schools that are closed during working weeks because teachers are away for courses. Certainly, I understand that people have to upgrade their professional skills, but it is very bad when students are denied access to education during those periods. I would like to see the establishment of a small pool of teachers, even if they were just at Band 1 level, who could carry out relief work in bush schools in the situation in which there was to be a substantial vacancy for a considerable period. That may not occur only when teachers are away attending courses, meetings or whatever.

The situation at Nyirripi is a case in point. Before the school holidays had even started prior to the beginning of last semester, the government was told that the 2 teachers had contracted hepatitis and would be away from work for a substantial period. The government had that information throughout the holiday break but nevertheless allowed the school to remain closed for 6 weeks of the final semester. That sort of situation should not be allowed to occur. Clearly, if that situation had occurred in an urban centre, the government would have moved to ensure that relieving teachers were put in place so that the education of those children could continue. In an urban community, the screams would have begun within a few days but, in a small remote community, 50 students were left without any education for 6 weeks because the government was not able to get itself organised. There had been no contingency planning to allow relief teachers to fill the gap in such a situation, and that state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. I hope that, as part of this package, the government will make a commitment to provide a pool of relief teachers, probably at Band 1 level, who will be available to go out to schools like Nyirripi should such a situation occur again.

Mr Speaker, I turn now to the rental rebates. As the Leader of the Opposition said, the rebate scheme does not address the problems faced by people living in silver bullets, tents and so forth, as occurred for some time at Nicholson River. In Western Australia, the government has set a standard. It has said that, for a married couple, a 3-bedroom house is the standard of accommodation which can reasonably be expected. If it cannot provide that

standard of accommodation, it waives rental payments. In really bad housing situations, it actually makes payments to people, and I understand that those payments have reached \$80 a day in some cases where people have been living in very poor conditions. However, the Northern Territory government still charges people to stay in silver bullets.

Mr Harris: Are you sure of that?

Mr EDE: I am sure that there is an allowance, although I do not have all the details of the amounts involved and the conditions. The minister made comparisons between South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory and I thought that he would have the details. The Leader of the Opposition spoke before lunch and the minister has had since then to clarify the matter. He has not done so. In the states that have been mentioned, silver bullets would be treated as emergency accommodation. There would be no question of receiving a rental rebate. There would simply be no rent and people would be able to apply for an emergency accommodation allowance.

In South Australia, and Western Australia, the standard for single accommodation is a 2- to 3-bedroom residence and the standard for a married couple is a 3-bedroom residence. Below those standards, no rent is payable. The minister made great play about the amounts of money that are provided in South Australia. Certainly, nobody has said that locality allowances and allowances for vehicle maintenance are not included in the overall amount. However, the fact is that people can opt to take these allowances in the form of a financial incentive. I am told that, in Western Australia, the amount for singles is \$4000 whilst for married people it is \$5000, whereas here we are talking about \$20 a week. Such interstate precedents must contribute to people's consciousness of how the Northern Territory government perceives their value in comparison with how governments in South Australia and Western Australia perceive people in similar situations. Certainly, our retention rates in bush areas are markedly below those in South Australia and Western Australia.

When people arrive in remote areas, one of the major difficulties is that they experience both isolation and culture shock, and are simply unable to handle that. The minister stated that beginning teachers are posted initially to urban and regional centres such as Alice Springs, Jabiru and so forth. It was not clear whether he was referring to beginning teachers trained in the Northern Territory and, in addition, those coming from interstate teacher training institutions. I certainly hope that he meant to include both groups.

I recall the situation at Lajamanu during the year before last. It might have occurred during the previous minister's time. The portfolio has changed hands so many times that it is hard to tell. Indeed, I think the then minister was Mr Hanrahan. Some 4 or 5 teachers were sent to Lajamanu straight from teacher colleges in New South Wales and elsewhere. Of course, it was an absolute shock for them. They were unable to cope with the isolation for a start. Having come from Melbourne and Sydney, they would have felt isolated if they had been living in Darwin. They had no means of direct communication with the outside world apart from a radio telephone which they did not know how to operate. They had to cope with dirt roads which were accessible only outside the wet season and by using 4-wheel-drive vehicles. They had to organise a significant amount of their stores by way of the RPT from Katherine. In addition to all that, they faced incredible culture shock.

I hope that the honourable minister can confirm that that situation will not occur again and that newly-trained teachers will have at least 2 years in

an urban area in order to come to grips with the Territory to some extent before being plunged into the bush. People going to bush locations need to attend induction courses. In South Australia, for example, induction courses last for 3 weeks, 1 week of which is spent in a bush community. People are able to get an idea of the situation. They are thrown in at the deep end for a week so that they are in a position to know what questions to ask. They then have time outside the community to consider how they will handle their experience and to look at any problems which they were previously unaware of.

In the Northern Territory, we have a 2-day induction course, with a call-back at some later stage during the term. Obviously, that is completely inadequate. It is even worse for people recruited during the course of the year because our induction courses are run only for people commencing at the beginning of the year. People recruited afterwards simply do not have that induction experience.

Mr Speaker, I have been unable to find any mention of monetary reward in the incentive package.

Mr Perron: You can't read!

Mr EDE: Where is it? It was not in your speech. We will take it that it is not there. The government cannot find it.

I believe that we have to look at communities individually on the basis of a disadvantage index. We need to be able to look at each of the various areas that are covered and to match those to the benefits that are paid. Some of those can be cashed up in terms of a zonal allowance and others may be handled in a different way.

Apart from that, there are things in relation to which the government could have gone further. One approach that I am surprised that the government has not taken on is giving people who are out bush the ability to enjoy the incentives offered to first home buyers in the Northern Territory to buy houses in urban centres, because that would give those people a financial stake in the Territory. If they were to be posted to town, they would be able to avail themselves of that provision, but the fact is that, because they are living in a remote area or at Nhulunbuy, for example, they are unable to buy a house in the locality where they are working. If it were to look at providing assistance of that sort to people who are posted to remote areas, which it provides for people who are posted to urban areas, I think that the government would probably find that many people, with a financial stake in the Northern Territory, would see that it was more in their interest to stay longer if a problem that was besetting them was of a temporary nature only.

I cannot understand the special study leave for 2 semesters. The majority of courses that I can think of that people would be involved in would run for a whole year. If somebody were being cynical, he could say that all that involved was that the government would give only 2 semesters of study leave and the people would take their other 2 semesters out of this one, and that the government is giving nothing. Obviously, the Chief Minister will be able to explain that when he speaks in reply, as he will be able to explain where the zonal monetary award is.

One of the areas that the Minister for Education spoke about was the whole idea of the government aiming to encourage local residents to take up teaching as a profession. Certainly, the start that he has had made with having people work in those larger areas for their first 2 years will assist in their

teacher development but - and I have said it before and I will say it again - I am unable to understand why the government has not moved and does not move with some speed to organise with another university, whether it be in Western Australia or Victoria or whatever, if the Northern Territory University is incapable of carrying it out on its own, to put into place a Diploma of Education which can be undertaken externally through the Northern Territory University. While these incentives provided for primary school teachers in promotion positions are, on the face of it, financially attractive, there is nothing that I can see which really comes to grips with the problem of attracting and holding secondary teachers.

I believe we have to set up a way by which people can come into the education system as teachers even if they started off their careers as a geologist or in some other profession which takes them out bush for quite considerable periods of time. I know a number of people who are in this situation. I come across them in the course of my work throughout the electorate. A number of them have talked to me about the family situation that has arisen because of the long periods that they spend out bush and how actually they would like to have a job which used their tertiary qualifications but which they could carry out in an urban area in the Northern Territory. They have come to like the Territory. They like the bush, but they are getting on in years, their families are starting to grow up and they want to spend more time with family members.

It would help greatly if those people were able to undertake a Diploma of Education through the Northern Territory University. They would then do their practical work in the Northern Territory - for example, in Alice Springs. That would be much better than their having to study through a southern university and do their practical work interstate which may be quite impossible because of financial considerations. It would be a step forward if we were able to provide that opportunity in the Northern Territory. If these people could get training here to enable them to follow on from their basic science degree to become secondary educators, obviously we would increase the pool of people available and the ability of those people to remain in the Northern Territory.

Those are issues that we will be looking at in more detail as we go into the pros and cons of teaching in tomorrow's Territory. As I said, it will have to be for tomorrow's Territory because it is already too late for today. It is too late for this year and, for many teachers, it is already too late for next year. What we have before us is a proposal for award restructuring. It will go through a period of debate, offsets and arguments between both sides as people work out what the new package comprises. I would hope that the government and the union movement will both work towards a reconciliation of the problems and towards a lean and tight service which is able to provide those incentives which the teachers see as being important in terms of holding them in the education system while maximising the education outcomes for students in the Northern Territory, whether they be in the primary, secondary or TAFE components.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the spirit of the Chief Minister's statement. In fact, I think all members would agree that it is timely that some acknowledgement be given to people in remote areas who, for some time now, have believed - and have shown it by voting with their feet - that they were inadequately paid or taken care of. It is fair to say that there has never been any doubt about the fact that the government would pay. The only point that remained to be determined was how and when the government would pay because, if it did not, there would be no people in the



remote areas to carry on the functions that are so important to the survival ...

Mr McCarthy: You have not got much faith in people's ability to stick it out, have you?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I will pick up the honourable minister's comment in a moment because it reflects the lack of understanding that many people in the remote areas have to contend with in dealing with their daily chores and the service that they offer to the community.

The contents of the package and whether or not it is a good package can be debated here today. We can all decide whether it is good or bad, but the final decision will be made by those people who will or will not benefit from it. If the exodus continues as it has in the last 12 months, then it may be necessary to review the terms of the package and make it more generous. If the work force stabilises, then it can be said and the government can justly claim that it has addressed the needs of people in remote areas and satisfied their concerns.

To pick up the interjection made by the minister a moment ago, I would like to place on record that the monetary compensation is but a part of the picture that teachers, medical staff, stock inspectors, field assistants and work supervisors in remote areas all consider when they are deciding whether they will stay. For instance, the repairs and maintenance program that is in place for remote area teachers is totally inadequate and unsatisfactory from the point of view of the staff. If you are a teacher at Alexandria Downs and your air-conditioner blows up, you cannot go to the station and get the mechanic to fix it. A man comes out a couple of days later from Tennant Creek and fixes it. If he decides that your air-conditioner has to be taken away to be repaired, it is not taken to the nearest place that fixes air-conditioners. It goes to Alice Springs. Everybody else in Tennant Creek has their air-conditioner fixed in Tennant Creek, but the Department of Education adds to the pain by sending it another 600 miles away, simply to make life a little more difficult for the teacher.

If you are a teacher at the Newcastle Waters School and your lawn-mower breaks down, you cannot wander over to the station garage and ask if it can be fixed. It is sent to Alice Springs. You find a Wridgways truck in the middle of the night, ship the lawn-mower off to Alice Springs and wait for 3 weeks for it to come back. Then, you go out to the turnoff and pick it up in the middle of the night. Mr Speaker, if you really want to know what upsets remote area public servants, it is that sort of procedure which they have to live with day in and day out simply to keep their operations going. That applies to teachers, the staff of health centres or whatever.

In some cases, the money may be a very important consideration but, in some remote areas, I would say that a vehicle is the most important thing in a teacher's mind. In fact, a vehicle that works all the time is of paramount importance to teachers for their own safety, for the safety of the community in which they work and for the children whom they look after. But, in many cases, that sort of support does not exist and it is not forthcoming. I will put this on the record. Recently, I met a TAFE adult educator who is working in an Aboriginal community over 100 miles from Tennant Creek. He has no vehicle, no means of transport, no means of carting materials and no means of getting people to and from the job. They all hitch rides and carry material in the backs of other people's utes. I have no doubt in my mind that eventually that man will pull the pin and find a better place to work because

he is not going to continue to be jiggled around by this sort of caper. The money is good, he obtains satisfaction from the job, but there is only just so much he can take.

Another matter of concern for people in remote areas was referred to in the statement, but it was not dealt with in great depth. I refer to the need for staff in remote areas to have relief teachers available from time to time. Many teachers stay at their posts under extraordinary conditions simply because they know that, if they go to the hospital or the dentist or their mother's funeral, there is no one else. At the beginning of the year, the Kurundi school - and the minister and I have had a few words about this - went without a teacher for 4 months. The teacher arrived and then had to leave for family reasons, and there was no replacement for 4 months. Nobody wanted the job at the money offered. Nobody wanted the isolation. Eventually, the minister found somebody to go out there. The minister might correct me, but I believe it was on a contract basis and the teacher was paid nearly \$86 000 to be there for the balance of the year.

What is most important to the teacher at that school, the Epenarra school, is not the money or any of the other things. It is a telephone. To the teacher, the most important facility that the school could have is a telephone. Despite all of the considerations addressed in the statement, if telephones and contracts for maintenance and repairs are not taken into consideration, we are all weeing in the wind. That is the kind of very important facility that encourages people to stay.

I do not doubt that there will be a fair amount of comment during the course of debate about the removal of air fares. If there is a financial compensation for remote area teachers, that may well satisfy the needs of people who want air fares. Whilst I understand all the reasons why the fares were removed, I remind the minister about the teacher at Anthony Lagoon. He arrived to start the school year without an air fare. He accepted that. However, his mother or father died within weeks and he had to make a decision about flying to the funeral. The return trip would have cost him nearly \$1000. He did not have any fare entitlement and there were no compassionate grounds applicable. He had the \$500 for the fare down, but he certainly did not have \$500 for the return trip. He felt that, if this was going to happen to him every 12 months, he might as well teach down south.

Mr Perron: How many mothers does he have?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Chief Minister has flippantly asked how many mothers he has.

Mr Perron: You said that it would happen every 12 months.

Mr TUXWORTH: I guess that the gentleman has one mother and one father. However, other circumstances might crop up that would require him to go south. It was his decision to go, and to go permanently. That demonstrates that the terms and conditions that we offer are really very important.

One of the things that keeps coming through - and I am sure members from other rural constituencies have heard it a dozen times - is that many staff would be very keen to stay in remote areas if they could get some consideration for the rent they pay on their government home in the remote area against buying a home of their own when they move back into a major centre. Many teachers have said that they would have loved to stay for another 3 or 4 years, but that all the money they were paying on rent went

down the drain. If they were in town, they could plough it into their own home. That is a fair and reasonable proposition and it should be addressed at some stage if we want to keep people in remote areas.

Recruiting to remote areas will become more difficult. To realise that, you have only to read the Sunday and weekend papers of all the states and see the competition among state governments to recruit staff to remote areas. The incentives that are being offered now are very encouraging. In fact, I was talking to a senior teacher in Alice Springs a couple of days ago who said that, in a comparable position in Queensland, he could earn \$20 000 a year more. He has to make up his mind pretty soon whether to stay. That man has been in our service for at least 16 years and is a very valuable teacher. It will be a tragedy if he leaves the Territory. That is the sort of competition that the Territory has and, in a sense, it is very encouraging to see that the government is addressing it. However, it should keep the matter under close review because it is likely that it will have to be a little more generous. The staff in remote areas will let us know that by their decision to stay or go. However, there is an opportunity for the government to implement systems of support for remote areas that give heart and encouragement to people to stay in those areas.

I mentioned a couple of instances a moment ago about people in remote areas who have to put up with difficult circumstances when their lawn-mowers or photocopiers need to be fixed or their air-conditioners go on the blink. These might seem to be very insignificant issues to some honourable members, who may be asking themselves why I am cluttering up such a magnificent debate with things like that? The reason that I do so is that those are the very frustrating issues that people in remote areas find very hard to tolerate and, ultimately, those are the issues that cause people to leave.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to make some comments on what has been, effectively, 3 statements made today on a fairly complicated topic. The Chief Minister delivered a statement that referred to changes in terms of employment for public servants generally. He went on to refer to various schemes and proposals that would assist in the retention of those public servants and school teachers. He made specific comments about remote area conditions, and those were picked up in the second statement by the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government. Unfortunately, we do not have a copy of that statement, but I will be studying the transcript with some interest, particularly his reference to the points system for various remote localities. The member for Nhulunbuy had some pertinent comments to make in that regard.

The third statement came from the Minister for Education. He referred to the general areas of conditions for teachers, award restructuring and so on. He concentrated on the problems of retention of and conditions for teachers in remote localities. It is unfortunate that we have not had the opportunity to study the particular document which he tabled, nor have we had the opportunity to read the statement which accompanied the tabling of that document. However, I assure the Minister for Education and the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government that, because those issues impinge on many of my constituents, I will be studying those documents with care, advising my constituents of their contents and seeking their views in that regard.

I have some general comments to make, firstly, about recruitment and retention and, secondly, about remoteness. It is a matter of considerable concern to me that, in the provision of public sector services in the Northern

Territory, we are having difficulties with the retention of qualified staff. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, there has been considerable concern in the face of this government's intransigent attitude over air fares for public servants. People are feeling that there is no longer value in staying in the Territory, given the government's determination to erode conditions.

Specifically, my soundings within the Department of Mines and Energy indicate that, at least in 1 area of the department's responsibilities, the retention of staff is a considerable problem. Mr Speaker, you would be aware of the changes in staff in the Alligator Rivers Region Unit which is responsible for the administration of the Uranium Mining (Environment Control) Act. I hardly need point out the implications of that for the Territory as a whole and for the future of the Territory. If the Territory government and this Assembly are to have the respect of the nation for their ability to consider the impact of mining and to argue for the extension of mining arrangements in the Territory, particularly in the wetlands, it is vitally important not only that we recruit but also that we retain staff of a high calibre in that area.

We have been discussing also the retention of school teachers, which is a subject of which I am aware personally. It is a matter of concern to me that the rate of retention of school teachers in schools in my electorate is, I believe, less than it was 10 or 15 years ago. I believe that there is a higher turnover of teachers in the Aboriginal schools of the Northern Territory than was the case 10, 15 or 20 years ago. The reasons for that require examination.

The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government talked about a points system. He mentioned that, on the basis of this points system, a place like Yulara was on a par with a place like Nhulunbuy. I will be examining that system fairly closely. I wonder, however, whose opinion he obtains when he rates particular places. My recollection of his comments is that he said that the access to shopping at Yulara is of a good standard. There is not a bad range of goods available at Yulara, but I do not think you will get people to suggest that they have to do anything other than undertake a large amount of their shopping in Alice Springs, which is 5 hours away by road. The comment from the honourable minister was instructive in that regard. I will be taking a particular interest in the way that that scheme is likely to operate. It is a shame that the minister was not able to provide a copy of his statement so that some understanding of the system could have enabled a more detailed debate.

Mr McCarthy: You 2 were out of the House and therefore you would not have heard.

Mr BELL: To answer the interjection, I was here throughout his comments and I listened to them carefully.

Mr Hatton: What about my interjection?

Mr BELL: The interjection from the Minister for Health and Community Services was a little too sotto voce. If he would like to make it again, I will take him up on it.

Mr Hatton: When was the last time you provided a written statement of what you put forward in the middle of a debate?

Mr BELL: I have a simple answer to that, Mr Speaker. If I had an army of ministerial staff and public servants working for me, I would have been able to supply a copy of a statement I would make today a week ago.

Let us look at this word 'remote'. In one sense, the Territory as a whole is remote ...

Mr McCarthy: Sydney is remote from London too.

Mr BELL: I will pick up that interjection too. Remoteness is a state of mind. I do not think too many people in the Northern Territory worry too much about being remote from London these days. They might have done so 200 years ago, but they are not particularly concerned now. I recommend that the honourable minister do some research. I recommend 'The Fatal Shore' by Robert Hughes which is very popular this year. Remoteness in that sense is not a big problem in the Northern Territory and, for the member for Arafura, remoteness is not a problem at all. His family are very close to him. Like many other members of this Assembly, I have a brother who is 2000 miles away in Adelaide and a mother who is about 2500 miles away in Melbourne. A similar situation would apply for the vast majority of people born outside the Territory. A very large percentage of people in the Territory find it 'remote' in exactly that sense, and that has implications for all of us. Let me give an example from my own experience, and I have referred to this in debate before. I have had the experience of having to send 2 of my kids away to school. I will not go into the reasons for that in this debate. Suffice it to say that I have conscientious reasons for having done so. However, it is precisely that remoteness, and the lack of variety in the available secondary education facilities, that have caused me to do that. That is one aspect of the term 'remote'.

Quite clearly, I am one of the few non-Aboriginal members of this Assembly actually to have lived in what are popularly termed remote localities in the Northern Territory. I heartily endorse the comments made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in respect of conditions in remote communities. One of the distortions of self-government has been to pretend that nowhere in the Northern Territory is remote. All of a sudden, in July 1978, we had a variety of people attempting to say that, because the Territory was a self-governing entity, there were no problems of remoteness. It is heartening to see that the government has come to a slightly more realistic assessment of the difficulties in this regard.

Recently, a statement was tabled in this Assembly about the problems of women in remote locations. It raised various issues. It is important to make the point that so frequently women, who are not necessarily employed themselves, have some of the bigger problems to deal with in remote localities and perhaps in many parts of the Territory that might not be considered remote. I will not go into the questions of frontier mentality and remoteness, and their impact on women, but I think that that needs to be given consideration in this context. One other group needs to be referred to. Apart from the public sector employees, problems are experienced by people in remote localities, on remote cattle stations and in remote tourist enterprises. Although it may be necessary to consider the problems of those people in another context, there can be no doubt that the conditions provided to public servants in remote localities will affect the services provided to those people as well. Many of those people rely, for example, for their schooling on School of the Air services.

I want to make a brief reference to the importance also of Commonwealth programs in this regard. I have received representations from a cattle station in my electorate. A manager and his wife have recently been appointed and they took up the position at that station with their school-aged kids believing that they would be able to enrol them in the School of the Air, have a weekly mail service and exchange their lessons in that way. This is an issue that I am laying at the door of the Commonwealth government. I refer to the Remote Area Service Subsidy, the RASS scheme, which supposedly provides postal services to people in remote localities. That is reviewed only once a year. If you happen to go to a community in the middle of that review period, the Commonwealth system does not allow you to be provided with a Remote Area Service Subsidy. It will consider it at the end of the subsidy period or at the beginning of the new subsidy period. The particular station that I am referring to went through that process. My latest information is that it has not been included in the new subsidy period. Those sorts of issues, addressed as they often are by the Isolated Children's Parents Association, are also issues that need to be addressed in this broad context of provision for people living in remote areas.

That is probably slightly beyond the scope of the statements referred to here. However, I place on notice the fact that I will be pursuing with vigour the conditions of school teachers, nursing staff, Conservation Commission officers and other government workers who are stationed in the remote areas of my electorate. For those reasons, I believe that it is important that these issues be debated. I will be looking forward to further consideration of them and further information in respect of their effect within my electorate and across the Territory.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR  
Ms June D'Rozario

Mr SPEAKER: I draw the attention of honourable members to the presence in the gallery of Ms June D'Rozario, a former member of this Assembly. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to her a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the matter of getting high quality people to staff the Northern Territory Public Service and indeed the matter of getting highly-qualified people to staff the private sector in the Territory has been a continuing problem. Need I say, on a day like today when our air-conditioning has broken down, that climate is one of those aspects that many people from the south consider. It takes some time for them to acclimatise and some people say that, if it were not for the climate, most probably they would consider coming here. There is a problem.

I welcome the Chief Minister's statement and the effort that he has made to address some of the problems that face us. It is important that our public servants be of a high calibre, that they see for themselves a career structure in the Territory and that they feel that their talents can and will be of use. In any job, one seeks a degree of satisfaction from the work being done. No one wants to be in a position which he is well qualified for, where he is satisfied with the salary and with the housing - and that is not always the case, as we well know - but where there are aspects of the job that leave him feeling that his talents are being wasted.

The member for Barkly made a very good point when talking about teachers in some of the remote localities. They are prepared to go there and put up

with the isolation, the different cultural situation and even the inadequate housing but, when they find that the kids do not turn up at school and they cannot do the job that they are trained to do, they lose heart. And who would not? We have dry area legislation in some parts of the Territory. Perhaps there should be a rule that the Toyota keys are taken away from Monday to Friday so that the kids are there, because ...

Mr Bell: You do not seem to know anything about it, Denis.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I would say to the member for MacDonnell that I have had this put to me on many occasions. People have said that this is a problem. When the Aboriginal people travel, the children travel with the parents and consequently they are not at school. As a former teacher - and as the member for MacDonnell should know - I am well aware that, unless children attend on a regular basis, day after day, it becomes very difficult to make the progress with teaching that everybody wants Aboriginal children to make. It requires a commitment from the community. It is something which needs to be brought to the attention of Aboriginal people and they need to value education. It may be that they need to have an even greater input into education because, if they do, then they will see its relevance and will do more to address among themselves this very important business of children attending the school on a regular basis, day after day, week after week, throughout the whole year. In spite of the fact that, in this sense, Sadadeen is not a remote area, I do have a considerable amount of experience with remote areas. I talk to many people out bush, and I know that this is one of the things that upset teachers who are prepared to put up with everything that working out bush entails and want to do a good job, but are prevented by lack of attendance.

During the 10 years that I have been a member of this Assembly, from time to time, members have asked during question time why there is no radiologist or orthodontist in Darwin. We are not talking about the remote areas then. We are talking about Alice Springs and Darwin, the 2 major centres. We know what a problem it has been to try to obtain specialists to service the Territory. In our view, Alice Springs and Darwin are not remote places. There are many very good things to make living in these 2 towns pretty agreeable, but great difficulty is experienced in recruiting such people, and that does not apply to the Territory alone. I understand that the bigger country towns in the states are having trouble also in getting the kind of highly specialised people whom I mentioned - radiologists, orthodontists and specialists in the medical field. It seems that these people want to live in the cities. Perhaps that is because they want to be near colleagues so that they can chat with them ...

Mr Hatton: Bigger money.

Mr COLLINS: Yes, the driving force may well be the bigger money and people will go to them if their services are essential, as often they are. They know that the customer will beat a path to their doors and they do not have to go out to what they may consider to be an isolated area and serve there.

To this end, I would raise the question of whether our universities are doing the fair and proper thing. It is purely a question mark on my part. I wonder whether they are endeavouring to train enough of these people. I can recall that, once upon a time, if you wanted to become a vet, the only courses offered were in Brisbane. I am speaking of the time when I was at university myself. I know there are other places now where veterinary training can be

obtained, but sometimes one wonders whether some limit is being placed on the number of people who are trained in a particular field. One would suspect again that, if the supply is down and the demand is high, then the price will rise ...

A member interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: Yes, there are other professional areas where they obtain their training. Whether it is university as such or whether it is medical school ...

A member: Peer assessment.

Mr COLLINS: Peer assessment! Don't mention it, please! I have been there and done that, and seen what a failure it has been.

However, there is another point, and this harks back to education. I simply say it is another and possibly a more astute and sensible reason why we are not obtaining people in these fields which require years and years of training. It is simply because of our education system and what I call the 'soft options'. You can have 6 months of this and 6 months of that and so forth. The bright kid picks the easy subjects. Through the grapevine, they know which teachers will make them do homework and which ones will not. Unless kids are very strongly motivated, they will choose the soft options. As I have often said, it is rather like the beer bottle. There is a broad range of a little of this and a little of that and, at the end of secondary school, they have not really learned how to learn. They have not studied in depth and learned how to study. They find then that their options at tertiary level are pretty limited and therefore they study sociology or something like that - some pretty useless kind of subject.

I do not resile from one word of that. I believe that things were far better in days gone by when the choice of subjects was very limited. You chose certain subjects, studied them year after year and built on them. You learned how to learn so that, when you entered university, you had enough background to give you the ability to cope with a very wide range of subjects at tertiary level. That ability was built on that foundation, which many people would say was narrow, but you had to stick with it. You had homework, you had public examinations and you did not move on unless you passed those public examinations. It might have been a narrow gate, but it led to a much broader and better system for the nation than that we have today, and I really believe that that is part of the problem.

The very fact that, in the last few weeks, we have had people go to Hong Kong to try to recruit maths and science teachers to teach in the Territory relates back to that. I believe that they are in short supply all over Australia. As far as I am concerned, this relates back to the soft options under which students can study 6 months of this and 6 months of that. As someone said, it is a smorgasbord. We are not preparing the children with good, rigorous, academic education which will allow them to fill teaching places later on. It is an absolute shame that we have to look overseas to seek maths and science teachers. The answer is partly in schooling and partly in the play of market forces. If physics and maths teachers are in short supply, we have to attract them and we have to pay more for them. Let us hope that the message spreads and that maths and physics teachers are paid more than the rest are.



I can imagine that the Northern Territory Teachers Federation would have fun with all of that. However, federation members eventually have children themselves and they suddenly become interested in the education of those children. Perhaps they might even send those children to private schools, being familiar with what is dished up and not wanting it for their own kids. If the desired result cannot be obtained by changing the education system, it is necessary to get the message out into the community so that parents are aware and the students are aware at a very young age that, if they want to get into teaching and they want to earn good money, they should choose the hard academic courses. Such a choice will mean that they have to work harder, but they will be well rewarded later on. They will not be stuck at the same level as people who are teaching macrame. I think I have made my point.

A member interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: No doubt it is, but is it adding a great deal of wealth to the national economy? I think not.

I look at the technical side of education. Technical people are a vital part of our society. We must have electricians, carpenters, builders, refrigeration mechanics and so forth. I wish we had some people who could fix the air-conditioning in this Chamber a little more quickly, and I am sure that every member feels the same. Unfortunately, we are not training enough people and giving them trade skills. I believe that part of the problem occurs in the schools. We need to give students something substantial at the end of Year 10, and I think of the former intermediate external examination which required students to demonstrate, after a year's hard work, including homework and study at school, that they were capable of handling subjects at that level. The age of 15 or 16 is an ideal time for that type of assessment, particularly for many of our young boys. Often girls seem to be a little more mature and settled. If lads of that age faced an external examination which was well respected in the community and was good training, they would be more inclined to tackle apprenticeships in the various technical areas. After another 3 years, they would have their certificates, with a couple of years in hand in which to gain experience before receiving full adult wages. By the time they reached the age of 21 and began to receive full adult wages, they would be very good contributors to society. But, what do we do? We give extra points to people from overseas if they can lay bricks.

We are not training our own people. Because we do not have the system I described, many kids simply drift on for another couple of years at school. They do not really know what they are there for. They are a nuisance to those students who really have some ambition and there seem to be fewer and fewer such students these days. The kids who are not motivated make the teaching system difficult and, when they have another 2 years of school under their belts, they think the world owes them a living. Employers are reluctant to employ them and to train them as apprentices in technical areas because their attitude is wrong. What is more, by the time they complete their apprenticeships, or possibly even before that time, they have to be paid full adult wages.

The problem is more one of attitude than anything else. Students are encouraged to believe that, because they have had 12 years of schooling, the world owes them a living. One of the hard lessons which people learn eventually is that the world does not owe any of us a living. I believe that the attitudinal problem could be significantly overcome in the manner that I suggested, with external examinations leading to certificates which are well respected in the community. If students have the right knowledge and know how

to learn, at least at that level, they are in a good position to enter technical studies.

There is a whole range of things which can and should be done to help to solve the problems and to supply people with the qualifications we are looking for. I welcome the Chief Minister's statement. With the limited resources that are available, it goes a reasonable way towards solving the problem. We need to keep in mind that government resources are very limited these days. It is pleasing to see an effort being made but there are other things which we could do and many of those go right back to the heart of things in the education field.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the statement made by the Chief Minister and the accompanying information that has been provided during this debate by the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government and the Minister for Education. What we have before us at present is a 3-part group of proposals to significantly address a number of the immediate and ongoing needs of the Northern Territory public sector. On the one hand, there are a number of specific conditions that apply to all people in the public service. These deal with general conditions, as outlined by the Chief Minister, in terms of employee development schemes, study assistance and so on. A second package of conditions is designed specifically to assist public sector employees working in remote areas of the Northern Territory. It is tailor-made to address the specific concerns that have been expressed in relation to those areas. Those conditions are designed in such a manner as to encourage people to stay in those areas for specific periods. I note, for example, that rental rebates are to be made at the completion of 12 months service in a given location unless the employee is relocated by the department or affected by some similar circumstance. This provides a direct incentive to employees to stay for at least a year in a particular location. This applies particularly to teachers because the continuation of a teacher's service to a particular class for a year is invaluable.

The third component creates a real challenge. It proposes a very imaginative and exciting restructuring of salaries and conditions for members of the Northern Territory Teaching Service. On the one hand, it provides for a substantial movement in salaries and, through restructuring, opportunities for growth, advancement and development as well as rewards for excellence in a new teaching service salary scale. On the other hand, it addresses many of the niggling problems that have led to concerns among parents, teachers and departments. These include factors like teachers leaving the classroom to attend in-service training and kids being sent home for pupil-free days while staff work out what they will do during the following year. There is a range of similar activities, all of which are disruptive to the learning process and disruptive to the school. The proposals also require teachers to be more readily available for direct contact with parents in order to discuss individual student needs and progress. The reverse side to that coin is that it provides opportunities for teachers to make contact with parents on a more structured basis. In many cases, teachers seek quite keenly to talk to parents about their concerns in relation to individual children.

The conditions relating to the teaching service can apply, of course, only if they are approved by the Industrial Relations Commission under the national wage-fixing guidelines according to the principles of structural efficiency and award restructuring. That places the challenge very much at the feet of teachers and the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. To pick up very exciting benefits, they need also to address some of the structural changes

which are spelt out very clearly in the document. It points to a very positive future direction with positive benefits for teachers. We can only hope that the Northern Territory Teachers Federation will have the courage to take the future in its hands and do something positive for the education system in the Northern Territory, for its members and for the delivery of education services. This package provides the challenge and the opportunity for it to do so. It will be instructive to all of us to see the response to this proposal that comes from the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. It is only through the process of negotiation and, finally, with the approval of the Industrial Relations Commission, that that opportunity will be made available to Territory teachers and Territory kids. It will be fascinating to watch the end result.

I must say that the member for MacDonnell stirred my interest in participating in this debate with his unique definition of remoteness. His definition of 'remoteness' is that, if you live away from where you were born, you are living in a remote condition. According to that definition, every migrant to Australia is living in remote circumstances. On the member for MacDonnell's definition, migrants who have come to Australia of their own free choice, and who live in the inner suburbs of Melbourne, should be able to receive remote area conditions of service because they are separated from their families. What nonsense! That has nothing to do with the definition of 'remoteness', and I urge the member for MacDonnell to get his mind out of his fiction books and deal with reality when he discusses these issues.

There is no doubt that there are remote locations in the Northern Territory where people are unable to access the services and the infrastructure which are important in providing them with a decent quality of life. There are circumstances also in which people are required by their employment to be in locations that they may otherwise choose not to be. These tend to define conditions of remoteness. It is very difficult to define as a condition of remoteness, for example, an Aboriginal person living on his own traditional lands where history tells us his people have been living for some 40 000 years. To say that he is suffering from a sense of remoteness is wrong. He may well feel a sense of remoteness if he were required to be relocated to Sydney. Conversely, people such as myself and many members of this House, who voluntarily chose to move and make the Northern Territory our home and are living where we want to live, in my view do not have a right to complain about living in some sort of remote circumstances. If we do not like where we are living, we should choose to live somewhere else. The reality is that we choose to live here because it is the environment in which we prefer to live. That does not entitle us to additional conditions of service.

The conditions outlined in this statement are designed to address specific matters that refer to genuine remote issues. I refer to teachers, nurses, rangers and government employees who deliver government services in areas away from their families, friends and professional and social contacts, often for specific or limited periods of time, because they are requested or required to go there in the course of their employment. I should add police officers to that list because police officers are required to be located in particular places. Those are the circumstances that we need to be addressing when looking at remoteness. It is true that different areas have different levels of disability resulting from remoteness and therefore different conditions will be applied. The method of determining that will always be open to debate because it is inevitable that a level of value judgment will be applied. I trust that we will not see this debate degenerate into an irrelevant argument about contrary beliefs. Rather, we should concentrate on the principles and directions and, if finetuning is required over time, that should occur in a

proper and controlled manner. Through that, we can develop proper and appropriate services for Northern Territory public sector employees. I support these conditions adamantly.

Whilst we have referred to the opportunities that exist as a result of the proposals for teachers, we must remember that the national wage process of award structuring and structural efficiencies can open up similar opportunities in other areas of service. We know the NTPS generally is in the process of negotiating restructuring packages along similar lines to that proposed for teachers. Similar opportunities can and will become available in the very near future as soon as we can get negotiations under way. In respect of my portfolio responsibilities, I am interested in the Conservation Commission, in particular the rangers. Equally, I am particularly interested in the circumstances of nurses and doctors who work under their own award conditions. However, there are opportunities for negotiation to develop structures of mutual benefit for the health administration and the people working in those professions to deal with many of the frustrations experienced by both sides of that equation. I trust that we can enter into those negotiations in a positive frame of mind to find real solutions to assist people to have a better work environment, to give them more personally rewarding employment and to provide a more efficient and effective delivery of service to the community. With those comments, I support the statement by the Chief Minister.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to support the Chief Minister's statement. The general thrust and direction of his statement is where we should be heading. There is one matter that has not received much prominence and I would like to talk about that. The remote areas study assistance and the various schemes etc are heading in the right direction. What is missing is a statement about basic living conditions in remote localities. I would like to share a few experiences that I have had.

When listening to the Chief Minister's statement, I was reminded of some trips that I took out to the Ngaanyatjarra country which is over on the Western Australian border. The areas that I visited that come to mind include Wingalina, Warburton, Blackstone and Kintore. These areas are probably as remote as one would find anywhere. I had to admire all the public servants, the teachers, the mechanics etc who were delivering government services in these places. I asked myself what would entice me to work in such places.

The first thing required is a commitment by the person who goes there. Secondly, basic living conditions need to be provided. At one of the places, I was picked up from the plane by someone driving a tractor because that was the only vehicle in the community that was operating at the time. When we reached the residence of the person with whom I was transacting business, the generator broke down. I recall that the community put pressure on this person to fix the generator because the mechanic was working elsewhere. We spent the next 3 or 4 hours repairing the generator in 50° heat. When we returned to the residence, the water was hot because the generator had broken down, and the fruit and vegetables in his fridge had spoiled. When you take all that into account and the heat, the dust and the flies, you begin to realise how important it is for people in remote localities to have the basic necessities. I believe that has not been properly addressed in the minister's statement.

On a number of occasions, I visited MacMahon Construction camps, particularly when they were building the railway line from Adelaide to Alice Springs. I was fascinated by the accommodation, the food and indeed the entertainment that was supplied to the workers. The facilities for public

servants in the Aboriginal communities that I visited were nowhere near those offered to the MacMahon Construction workers.

When we take into account the isolation experienced by the public servants whom we expect to go to these remote communities, the first thing that we need to think about is providing basic services. I believe that has not been properly addressed in the minister's statement. Certainly, I understand that the government has problems in terms of budgetary constraints. I can understand that, and I fully support the general thrust of the minister's statement. Any rewards we can offer to people who work in remote localities, coupled with the provision of at least minimum living conditions, will go a long way towards making things better for them.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few comments in relation to the conditions for public servants in remote communities. These public servants face a number of problems, in particular a lack of accommodation, lack of access to vehicles and communication problems. There are difficulties in relation to flying in and out of Darwin from the islands. At times, road access is difficult to places like Gunbalanya, Maningrida and Cobourg Peninsula.

The idea of having the government commission the Catholic Church to run the school and the health centre is a good one. The missions have been out in the communities working with the people for a number of years. In some places, it is very difficult to get staff to work in communities because of problems with alcohol, petrol sniffing and so forth. Whether it is the Catholic Church, the Uniting Church, the Church of England or whatever, the schools and the health centres are run properly and efficiently. However, there is still a lack of accommodation, especially in places such as Minjilang and Goulburn where the staff turnover rate is very high.

The difficulty at Maningrida is that there are 8 different language groups living in the one community. I believe that the teachers have 2 bilingual programs in the school which makes it a bit difficult for the staff to teach the kids there and to learn Burarra and Gunbidji, the main 2 languages used in the Maningrida area. It is very hard and sometimes very frustrating for the teachers there to try to teach the kids because they have to put up with several problems. The fact that 2 languages are spoken at the school does make it difficult for them. I have nothing against the bilingual program. It has been operating for the last 10 years. I have my own personal view on it, that ...

Mr Harris interjecting.

Mr TIPILOURA: We all have that, but the program is there. It is the community's choice. If they want to have a bilingual program at their school, that is their business. However, we must face some of these problems. It may be a good idea to send the teachers out there for a week or 2, to see if they are able to understand the problems in the community and the living conditions and to determine if they agree that the school should be run the way it is. Sometimes the teachers feel that they have been left out. They try to teach the kids, but they find it hard because, with the bilingual program in the community, the community is starting a new program for itself, but they are supposed to be there to teach the kids.

The other aspect is the combination of rents whereby the government can subsidise the rent these people are required to pay. There is also a lack of vehicles for use by the staff so that they can move around the community and

go out for a day trip or for a weekend. If they have a vehicle, they can go out bush and camp at one of the beaches in the community or, if they come from the remote island where I come from, the teachers can use a vehicle for a long weekend or whatever. Perhaps the teachers and other public servants could be provided with an air fare every 6 weeks so that they could fly or drive into town to spend a weekend with their families in town and do a bit of shopping. That would allow them to come in with the wife and kids and take them to enjoy a decent meal in a restaurant or something like that. That ability could be provided by the government.

If the matter is considered carefully, there are a number of things the government can do to help with these problems. From what the Chief Minister said in his statement, the government is on the right track. I think the Chief Minister has provided some relief for the people working in the bush. I think that it is about time that that happened because it has been 10 years since the Territory gained self-government and nothing has been done about the situation in that time. The government has started now to look after the teachers and public servants who work in the bush. It has taken 10 years for that to happen and that is really a long time. I appreciate that there are financial difficulties at this time, but the government has now done something about the situation, and that is good.

Mr Vale: What about your federal mates?

Mr TIPILOURA: The Commonwealth government has been lacking with regard to funding in communities, but there is still much work that needs to be done in the Territory.

In relation to the TAFE college in the bush, the Open College, not enough vehicles are provided for the adult educator to use one as his own so that he can move around the community. A vehicle is needed also for use by students undertaking their driving tests and so on.

There is a lack of communication facilities in some areas of my electorate. Croker and Goulburn Islands are the most disadvantaged. They have been using the radio telephone now for a number of years. Hopefully, within the next year or so, a telephone service should be provided there. In communities such as Goulburn and Croker, the staff turnover is very high because there is a lack of access to communication facilities, recreational facilities in the community, transport and other services of that kind, and there is also a heavy demand on flights in and out of the islands or from a community to Darwin, Alice Springs or wherever.

The members for Stuart and MacDonnell spoke about some of the problems in their electorates, and the member for Nhulunbuy mentioned some of the concerns he has at Nhulunbuy at present. I welcome the package, but I think a lot of work needs to be done on it. I agree with the special study leave arrangements except that, in the remote communities, they will be very hard to implement because they will disadvantage the students there. It is very hard to replace a teacher and it will be especially hard to put in a temporary teacher to replace the teacher who is on special leave. It will be a disadvantage for the community. I support some of the initiatives that the government has put forward, but I think the special leave arrangements need to be looked at rather more carefully ...

Mr Harris interjecting.

Mr TIPILOURA: Yes, perhaps they can take some time off during the school holidays and so on rather than during the school semester.

The proposal for meeting family costs is all right. However, as I said, whilst I think that the government is on the right track now, if this had been done 5 or 10 years ago, perhaps there would be more people in the Territory than there are now.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER  
Draft Heritage Legislation

Mr HATTON (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I lay on the Table a draft of the Heritage Conservation Bill for consideration by members, and I move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

Honourable members will remember that the government's intention regarding the introduction of heritage legislation was discussed in detail at Legislative Assembly sittings late last year. The need for heritage legislation in the Territory has been discussed within the community for some time, with a growing recognition of the significance of cultural and natural heritage within our communities. Conserving those objects and places that Territorians regard as worth keeping and handing on to future generations has become a major issue during the past few years.

The Conservation Commission undertook a very detailed survey of existing heritage legislation in states and the Commonwealth in an effort to identify appropriate areas which need to be covered in the Territory. The result of this research was documented in a discussion paper issued in January this year and open for public comment until the end of May. Bodies, including the National Trust and local government councils, as well as interested members of the public, provided worthwhile comment to the Conservation Commission on many of the issues raised. However, given the importance of the protection of our heritage, more comment on the broader substance of the issue could have been expected. In particular, we received no comment from opposition sources. Therefore, I have decided to present draft legislation at this stage in the hope that it will stimulate further comment, particularly from the opposition and from various non-government environmental organisations in the Territory so that, hopefully, we can achieve consensus on the form of legislation required before the bill is presented to this Assembly.

With legislation of this type, where there is broad community agreement on the necessity to ensure the protection of our heritage, I believe it should be possible to present a bill which is supported by both sides of this Assembly, provided that we have the opportunity to address any opposition concerns at the drafting stage. It is my intention to have a heritage bill ready for consideration by this Assembly early next year. While I believe there is community consensus on the need to preserve worthwhile aspects of our heritage, there are some people who may well question the need for more legislation, considering that already we are able to confer protection on many aspects of our heritage. It is true that current legislation provides a large measure of protection for many heritage objects and places. Among the legislation which is reviewed and administered by the Conservation Commission, there is, for instance, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, which provides for the protection and management of native animals and for the establishment of parks and reserves. The Native and Historical Objects and Areas Preservation Act protects some historical, anthropological and

archaeological sites. However, this will be abolished when heritage legislation is introduced.

The Soil Conservation Act protects the natural heritage of soil and land. The Environmental Assessment Act provides for assessment procedures and guidelines regarding the effect of development on the environment. Under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Act, we have provided for and protected Finke Gorge National Park, Keep River National Park, Ormiston Gorge National Park, Simpsons Gap National Park and Watarrka National Park, Cobourg Marine Park, 19 nature parks, 12 conservation reserves, 12 historical reserves and 34 other conservation areas. In addition, there is separate legislation covering Gurig National Park, which is jointly managed by the Conservation Commission and the Aboriginal traditional owners, and Nitmiluk National Park which is managed by the Conservation Commission on behalf of the Aboriginal owners.

Under the package of legislation administered by the commission, protection is provided for natural features of the landscape, flora and fauna, historical sites, buildings and other structures of historical relevance. For instance, Watarrka National Park protects natural features around Kings Canyon and historical evidence of early pastoral activities, and it is also playing a major role in protecting some endangered animal species. Arltunga Historical Reserve preserves historical relics of early mining operations in central Australia. Litchfield Park protects spectacular escarpment country, with waterfalls and large permanent waterholes and gorges, and provides for public recreation and appreciation of the natural environment. The Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historical Reserve protects buildings and pioneer relics of the town's early history. The Cutta Cutta Caves Nature Park protects the fragile underground environment of the caves system, while providing public access.

Under the Environmental Assessment Act, the Conservation Commission examines development proposals and makes recommendations according to guidelines which have, as their main aim, the protection of the environment. The commission administers the National Trust (Northern Territory) Act which provides protection primarily for historic buildings, places and properties. The commission's heritage project continues to respond to the Australian Heritage Commission regarding nominations to the Register of the National Estate of places in the Territory.

Last statistical year, the Territory government allocated \$120 000 to the heritage grants program for 22 projects, while the National Estate grants program received \$261 000 from the Commonwealth for 26 projects. Grants were made to a range of private organisations as well as to the Conservation Commission, the Museums and Art Galleries Board and the National Trust. One heritage project of particular importance, which was jointly funded by the Territory and the Commonwealth governments as a bicentennial commemorative program, was the Hermannsburg historic village restoration.

The range of projects supported by the National Estate program includes: a survey of fossils, Aboriginal rock art and place names; a conservation study of the rufous hare wallaby, nabarlek and wading birds; surveys and documentation of the historical and cultural heritage sites in the Gulf, Victoria River and Douglas-Daly districts; an interpretative study of Channel Island; a survey of the first 104 lots in Stuart, Alice Springs; and a study of fettlers' quarters associated with the Ghan Railway.

Projects supported by the Territory government include: an extension of the small museums project; survey, documentation, collection and restoration



of small engines; heritage awareness education; inland mission buildings survey and documentation; Pine Creek properties presentation; archival work on the Tuxworth-Fullwood collection; conservation work and study on the superintendent's house at Milingimbi; Macassan wells and Cape Don lighthouse precinct; and assistance in the purchase of the Clive Fenton Gypsy Moth. The National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory) is supported by the Territory government and, last year, it received a grant of \$72 000 towards its operational expenditure.

Other legislation, some of which is administered by other areas of government, also has vital heritage aspects. The Strehlow Research Centre Act provides for the protection and display of items and related stories of Aboriginal heritage, some of which were in danger of being lost. The research centre, to be built in Alice Springs, will house and manage the collection accumulated by the late Professor T.G.H. Strehlow and his father Karl of artifacts, field notes, films, genealogies, sacred objects and recorded oral traditions associated with the culture and ceremonies of central Australian Aborigines. The centre promises to be the foremost institution of its type in Australia and will perform a valuable vocational and research role which will benefit Aborigines as well as other Australians.

History is also a heritage item worthy of preservation and, to this end, the Conservation Commission sponsors annual history awards and grants. This year, the \$20 000 award was presented to Alice Springs researcher Kate Holmes to allow her to write a book on the history, archaeology, conservation and presentation of the Arltunga mining site. Grants were provided too for a range of historical projects including research into Fijian missionaries in Arnhem Land, the fight against trachoma, and scouting in the Territory.

Other legislation provides for the Museums and Art Galleries Board, which has an interest in 30 museums throughout the Territory of varying sizes and covering a diverse range of material of artistic, scientific, historical and cultural value. Professional museum staff provide advice and assistance and operate a travelling conservation workshop to develop regional museums to a high standard. This year, the Muluwurri Museum display on Melville Island and the Residency Museum display in Alice Springs were completed, and work is expected to be completed soon on the Fenton Gallery at the Katherine Museum. Next year's schedule includes display designs for the battery at Tennant Creek and the Palajilli Museum on Bathurst Island, display upgrading for the Stuart Auto Museum, the Central Australian Aviation Museum and the Pine Creek National Trust Museum, and work on the 1990 travelling exhibition and field workshop.

Mr Vale: Do not forget Alice Springs.

Mr HATTON: I must say, Mr Speaker, that I have not forgotten the Ghan Preservation Society which does a wonderful job in preserving an important part of the Territory's history.

The Planning Act is used by the government for heritage protection. One of the tests applied to proposals for development or for zoning changes is to assess the impact of heritage values. In practice, the Planning Act has been used to provide heritage protection where no specific legislation has existed. It will be amended slightly, in line with the heritage legislation, when the latter is enacted.

It is obvious that a very comprehensive range of Territory heritage issues is being addressed already by the government and that there is legislation to

provide a high level of protection. However, in some instances where the government has decided to provide protection for heritage purposes, no specific legislation has existed. Admiralty House, the old Timber Creek Police Station and the old Myilly Point houses are examples. This draft bill will provide the legislative backing to make protection of such properties easier in the future. Other areas have also been very difficult or impossible to address within the current legislation. These include Aboriginal sites with scientific significance which may not have value for Aborigines, early Chinese, European and Macassan cultural history, fossils and sites of geological interest, and landscape areas not covered elsewhere.

The draft Heritage Conservation Bill presented today would address those areas and, together with existing legislation, would give the Territory a package of heritage legislation which is among the most comprehensive in Australia. Its objectives are: to encourage and assist private owners to use and maintain heritage places through cooperation and agreement rather than through regulation or acquisition; to establish public procedures for determining the status of heritage places and to promote community awareness of, and input into, the assessment procedures; and to establish a declared and known list of assessed heritage places which can be used in effective land-use planning and to ensure their protection. The draft bill provides for processes to: identify and assess places of heritage value; develop appropriate expertise in such assessment with the creation of a ministerial advisory body; develop mechanisms for public comment; create a system of notification for heritage places; develop contractual agreements for the protection of sites of recognised value; create a system of financial incentives or compensation to secure preservation; acquire a site by voluntary relinquishment or compulsory acquisition; and provide appeal mechanisms at various stages.

This draft bill provides the basis for full protection of our heritage and the intention is that it be monitored constantly to ensure that it remains relevant, appropriate and workable. It allows for private owners to be encouraged to use and maintain heritage places while the entire community will be made aware of the assessment procedure and asked for input. In line with this government's commitment to community participation, the conservation of heritage places will be sought through cooperation and agreement rather than through regulation or acquisition, although I would add that, if necessary, the protection of assessed heritage places could be enforced through acquisition if absolutely necessary.

It is little use implementing legislation which has wide community opposition. Therefore, the public will be strongly encouraged to provide comment on this draft. It is by no means the final document and we would value any contributions which people may have to give. This draft Heritage Conservation Bill is of the utmost importance. I am pleased to present it now for perusal by honourable members. I will ensure also that it is distributed very widely for public comment. I propose to incorporate any amendments and additions found necessary as a result of this process, with a view to implementing the legislation early next year. I ask all honourable members to consider this draft carefully in order to ensure that implementation in 1990 occurs smoothly.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, I rise to address the minister's statement on draft heritage legislation. I would like to begin by referring to the overwhelming need for heritage legislation in the Northern Territory and the overwhelming community expectation that this Assembly should legislate to protect the heritage resources of the Territory. That need and that

expectation were referred to by the member for MacDonnell in August 1988 when the opposition proposed heritage legislation in this House - and not for the first time. For many years, we have tried to get some form of heritage legislation to protect the sorts of things which the Minister for Conservation has been talking about.

The government has had the benefit of a comprehensive report on Northern Territory heritage legislation since November 1979. Despite the expenditure of many thousands of dollars on the compilation of the report, nothing has been done to protect the Northern Territory's heritage, as has been evidenced by the demolition of such places as Turner House, Marron's Newsagency and so on. We are now seeing a government response that is probably 10 years too late. The federal government enacted heritage legislation 15 years ago and just about every state in Australia has adequate heritage legislation.

The honourable minister said that the opposition had not commented on a discussion paper. Our comments have appeared in the Hansard record over many years. If he had chosen to read them, he would have been familiar with our position on heritage legislation. The history of this government's response on heritage protection leaves a great deal to be desired. The minister talked about the Arltunga Historical Reserve. I wonder if he could comment on the mining exploration and drilling that has taken place in that area without the preparation of preliminary environmental impact statements.

The minister is inviting comment now on this draft legislation. Even though we have had a very short time in which to look at it, it is appropriate for me to draw attention to a particular aspect of that draft legislation now. I am wondering if any member opposite can explain clause 3(3) which says:

In this act a word or expression printed in bold print indicates that the word or expression (or a grammatical variation thereof) is defined in this section or elsewhere in this act but does not necessarily mean that the word or expression bears that defined meaning in the context in which it is used.

Unless somebody can explain that to me, I must assume that we have a definition which does not necessarily mean what it says it means. If that is not gobbledegook, I really do not know what is.

As we continue through the draft bill, it is evident that it could quite easily become Clayton's legislation. The council that will be established will have the Director of the Conservation Commission as its director. We may have a conflict of interest there. There are to be 8 members. We have a member from the Museums and Art Galleries Board, and that is very good because we have someone there with expertise. We have 2 further people, one of whom is an expert from the pastoral or mining industry and the other an expert in business or commerce. We are talking about heritage legislation. I wonder what their expertise is in relation to that? One person is to be appointed from the National Trust, and that is very appropriate for a council like this. A further 4 members are to be appointed by the minister for their expertise in such areas as engineering, geology, planning etc. We could easily end up with a committee that has possibly 2 people who have expertise and concern in relation to heritage and protection. There is no suggestion that anyone appointed by the minister will have any environmental knowledge or any heritage expertise.

We move on to the actual functions of the council under the proposed legislation. All it does is make recommendations. There is no power within

the committee to make any decisions. It advises the minister. We wonder whether anything will happen. The difficulty is that we then get on a merry-go-round that could literally go on for years. There are no time frames set in the proposed legislation other than the time set for people to respond to it.

Mr Hatton: That is what it is all about.

Mr BAILEY: That is fine. I am pointing out some of the difficulties with it as it is at the moment.

Clause 16(2) says that 'as soon as practicable after receiving an application' the minister will respond. We need time frames.

Mr Hatton: It is just a suggestion. That is what it is all about.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BAILEY: Under clause 16(3), it would appear that the onus is on the nominator to provide all the information and expertise that is required to prove that a site is of heritage value. A committee such as this should have the expertise to undertake some of the research itself. A decision could be deferred very easily and deferred repeatedly by requiring the person nominating the heritage area to do all of the work.

Mr Hatton: Why not? It is the basis of making a suggestion.

Mr BAILEY: Exactly where does that stop, and where does the actual committee start to use its expertise to assess the situation?

Mr Hatton: How do you prevent frivolous applications?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BAILEY: The council will make recommendations to the minister in relation to any place. It will make recommendations as to its acquisition or appropriate conditions, if any, for its protection. In other words, it may be that no decision will be taken to protect it.

A real concern that many people involved with heritage matters have is that the interim conservation order is issued at the minister's discretion. He has just referred to the problem of frivolous applications. However, a difficulty has occurred in the past. If it comes suddenly to the notice of an individual that some form of destruction of an important landmark might be about to occur, it is then up to the minister to decide whether or not to make an interim conservation order. We have real concerns that even a delay of 12 hours could result in a building like Turner House being bulldozed on a Sunday. Will the government do anything to protect places of that kind in the future? The minister may be able to explain to me why an interim conservation order cannot be placed over a heritage place even though there may not be a permanent conservation order over it as an identified heritage place. It would appear that an area could be identified as a heritage place, but not be protected by a permanent conservation order. I do not understand that.

Clause 24(3) states: 'A permanent conservation order shall contain a detailed description of the work to be carried out on the heritage place and the conditions, if any, subject to which the work may be carried out'. That is very good. However, under the heritage area of the budget for the

Conservation Commission, only 3 positions are funded. It is my understanding that only 2 of those positions actually exist within the heritage area where work is being done. What used to be a unit has been downgraded to a project. Under present funding, how will the commission fund the public servants to do the work required to carry out all of this? Will extra funding be allocated or will nothing happen until next year's budget? The heritage unit has been downgraded over the last few years in terms of its funding, responsibilities and the number of personnel involved.

I may be unfamiliar with the drafting of legislation, but it would appear that the recommendation for a permanent conservation order goes to the Administrator prior to coming to the House, and he may send it back to the committee for re-examination. That seems to be strange because he has that right at the end of the process also. I am not aware that that occurs with other legislation. Perhaps the minister can explain that double involvement.

The whole process may take years before an area is declared under a permanent conservation order. Once that has been done, the commission itself, not the committee, may amend the permanent conservation order at any time. Does that mean that, despite the fact that a permanent conservation order states that nothing can be done to an area, the commission can give permission for it to be destroyed at any time? There are major concerns with the way that this has been written. I hope that is because difficulty has been experienced in drafting this legislation, and that it is not the intention to create so many loopholes that it is unlikely that many areas would ever be protected under it.

I return now to the history of this government in relation to heritage protection. In Australia, we have the Registrar of the National Estate. Many governments try to identify areas of significance for national listing. It would appear that this government, which says that it is concerned about registration of significant places, has not registered a single item on that register since 1982. If it is concerned about registering heritage items, why has it not registered items on the national register?

Mr Coulter: Read out the list of registrations since 1982.

Mr Hatton: You should not simply rely on Simon's notes.

Mr BAILEY: They are not Simon's notes.

The minister spoke too about the way legislation helped protect Admiralty House, Timber Creek Police Station and the old Myilly Point houses. It is my understanding that fierce opposition from the National Trust, the Institute of Architects and the public is what protected Admiralty House. The Timber Creek Police Station was actually owned and protected by the National Trust. The old Myilly Point houses were protected under federal legislation and were nominated by the National Trust in the face of fierce opposition from the Territory government.

In the honourable minister's statement, there appears to be a total lack of recognition of the importance of Aboriginal sacred sites. We have no need to draw attention to the effort put in by this government over the years in opposition to Aboriginal sacred sites. In fact, we actually have a special area where the minister wants to protect Aboriginal sites of scientific significance. It does not matter if they do not have any value to Aborigines. Over many years, this government has tried to weaken the effect of sacred sites legislation and has not wanted to accept them. The states have had legislation for many years.

In conclusion, the opposition welcomes this proposal. However, after reading the draft bill, and given the government's previous record, we have strong doubts, although we do welcome the comment made at the end of the minister's statement. He proposes to incorporate any amendments found necessary as a result of the process of consultation, with a view to implementing the legislation early next year. I certainly hope that the legislation is significantly changed before it is implemented next year.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I was interested to note that honourable members on the government benches did not rise to speak.

I welcome this statement by the minister. It is about time the government said something about heritage issues and what it intends to do about them. However, it is one thing to present a statement with the best intentions and to carry through those intentions. It is another thing to present it tongue-in-cheek. Not that I doubt the motives of the honourable minister. Never let that be said. However, he does belong to a party. Whilst I think his motives in presenting this statement are of the highest, nevertheless, I believe that his intentions may be watered down somewhat, perhaps in the implementation of this legislation by his party.

In his statement, the minister addressed several points of interest on which one could expand at length. I will not do that. I will say that it is a pity that the minister did not provide honourable members with a copy of this draft legislation before he delivered his statement to the House. I deprecate most strongly the ad hoc way in which ministers distribute statements, and sometimes fail to distribute them, before they deliver them to the House. Some do and some do not. Sometimes some do and sometimes some do not. I suppose the level of debate varies according to whether or not one receives a copy of a statement in advance so that one can at least riffle through it and get the gist of it.

The honourable minister mentioned the heritage objects and places that the Conservation Commission is looking at now and which it administers now. As I have said before, as far as its budget allows, the Conservation Commission does a good job. However, the commission has several areas under its control, which I have drawn to the attention of previous Ministers for Conservation if not this minister, which are not being protected adequately for the future. If the honourable minister would like to receive a copy of my correspondence in that respect, I would be happy to send it to him. One such area is Fogg Dam. Another is the old army camp in the Black Jungle area of Koolpinyah Station. Whilst the minister has spoken of the spectacular escarpment country, the waterfalls, the permanent waterholes and gorges in Litchfield Park, he has made no mention of it as a heritage area. He has not mentioned the old tin mine and workings in that park. I mention those 3 areas which are under the control of the Conservation Commission because I believe that, because of budgetary restrictions, not enough is being done for them.

It is one thing for the minister to tell other people what to do about heritage areas and quite another thing for him, through the Conservation Commission, to administer properly the areas already under his control. I believe that the minister could take account of the \$1m that was set aside in the commission's budget to pretty up the northern suburbs by planting trees in order to satisfy the aims of the Chief Minister in terms of the greening of Darwin. It would do the Minister for Conservation and the Conservation Commission much more good if that \$1m were reallocated to looking after those 3 places which the Conservation Commission already has under its control and which, I believe, need considerable work done to raise them to the standard of heritage areas.

The minister referred to Admiralty House which has played an important role in the history of Darwin. Whilst the building itself was constructed only in the 1930s, it is quite an old building for Darwin and has quite an historical aura. I can remember very clearly a proposal, raised at several CLP party meetings about 4 Chief Ministers ago, that Admiralty House and Audit House be dismantled piece by piece and reconstructed in the Botanical Gardens as part of an historical precinct. Unfortunately, the Chief Minister of the time had no sense of history. He lacked a few other things but, at the time, I did not have the experience to tell him what they were. If he were here today, I would do so. Mr Deputy Speaker, history is where it happens, not where you put it.

Mr Vale: Not necessarily. What about Captain Cook's cottage?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: History is where Captain Cook's cottage was.

Mr Vale: Do you know where it is?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I know where Captain Cook's cottage is. It would be more historical if it had stayed where it was.

In the time that I have lived in Darwin, I have seen many old historical buildings wrecked and lost for all time to the heritage and visible history of Darwin. No doubt people who have lived here longer than I have will have seen more government vandalism. A short while after I ...

Mr Perron: It was not vandalism. If you owned one and you were told ...

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It was government vandalism. They were government buildings, not private ones.

A short time after I was elected 11 years ago, the Parap Police Station, which was quite an historic building, was bulldozed for reasons which I cannot recall. I remember also the Darwin library being housed in a very interesting building in the style of a stone cottage next to the old Darwin Hotel. I can remember also the Motor Vehicle Registry Office being located in a very interesting building in the style of a stone cottage on the site now occupied by the Reserve Bank. Those are only a few of the buildings that I can remember which have been destroyed.

Again, a couple of years after I was elected, a rent-a-mob group came up here to rant and rave at the government about its not providing low-cost accommodation. In the course of their ranting and raving, they squatted in one of the old Myilly Point houses. They had no reason to rant and rave about low-cost accommodation which was provided then as it is provided now for those who need it. After those people were removed from the house at Myilly Point, if my memory serves me correctly, it was bulldozed so that they could not squat there again. That was a great pity.

It is good to see that the government and others are becoming aware of and taking steps to preserve the history of the Northern Territory because, although the Territory was settled relatively recently, there will not be much evidence of its history in 100 years or 200 years unless we start preserving historical places, buildings and other features of interest now.

The honourable minister stated that an objective of the legislation will be 'to encourage and assist private owners to use and maintain heritage places through cooperation and agreement rather than through regulations or

acquisition'. I heartedly endorse that. As I do not have extensive knowledge of other parts of the Northern Territory, I can speak only from my knowledge of the Top End, but I know of old shops which are still used by their owners. I am talking about the old stone shops in Cavenagh Street which were part of the old China Town. I believe that families who live in or use those old stone buildings should be encouraged to continue to do so, but in no way should they suffer deprivation by reason of the fact that they are living in historical buildings.

The honourable minister says that he places considerable emphasis on assessment of buildings and historical places, which are all man-made. Although I have not had time to read through his statement thoroughly, he does not appear to mention other aspects of what could be considered to be Northern Territory heritage and which are not man-made. I refer to natural heritage places inhabited by our native flora and fauna.

I am aware that the Conservation Commission has done much to conserve native species of fauna which were in serious danger of extinction. The mala and the bilby come to mind in this regard. The Conservation Commission is to be applauded for its work in regenerating the numbers of these animals and putting them out into the wild again. I believe that Aboriginal communities have helped to maintain the numbers of those animals in the wild. I believe also that, with proper budgetary consideration, the Conservation Commission and its officers could go a long way further, and not only in conserving species such as the Gouldian finch, which is not necessarily endangered by mining activities. It is mainly endangered by a naturally-occurring organism which lodges in its lungs and reduces its powers of survival and hence its rate of procreation. There are species of flora as well as fauna in the Northern Territory which, I believe, should be items of heritage consideration. If the honourable minister is honest in his presentation of this statement and the draft legislation, I believe he should give serious consideration to them.

I was very interested to read the projected composition of the proposed Heritage Advisory Council. It made me think immediately that perhaps this might be tongue-in-cheek legislation. When I read through the membership provisions, I gained a fairly clear idea of the individuals who would fill the various positions. If the minister does not know them, I could mention them to him afterwards. I certainly wonder whether those people will have a real sense of heritage. We do not want only public servants and CLP friends in those positions. We want members of the advisory council to have an interest in the preservation of heritage places and heritage as part of our natural environment. In making an educated guess about the possible membership of this body, I have my doubts, not so much about members' honesty as about the correctness ...

Mr Palmer: It has to be a balanced view, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The honourable member says it has to be a balanced view. I think his view might be less than balanced; it might be overbalanced.

I will conclude by saying that I applaud the honourable minister for making this statement. It could be called the greening of the CLP at last. I think CLP members have seen the writing on the wall. Greening is popular now, and they have realised that they have to do something about it. I think the honourable minister may have encountered some opposition in his own ranks, as I said earlier, but good luck to him for putting it forward. When the final legislation is presented to the House, I only hope that it will fulfil the aims for which we all hope it will be introduced.



Mr VALE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the Minister for Conservation's statement on the draft legislation. Let me say at the outset that, unlike the member for Koolpinyah, my knowledge is of central Australia not the Top End and therefore perhaps there can be a balance between the 2 of us.

There are few people in Australia who can say their entire, original village has been completely preserved and restored as we can in central Australia. I refer to the old Telegraph Station, and I pay tribute to the very many people, particularly those in the Conservation Commission and their predecessors who, over a long period, have worked diligently and faithfully to restore the old Telegraph Station north of what is now the township of Alice Springs - and we are indeed fortunate.

The list of historically restored and preserved items in central Australia on a per capita basis, if nothing else, is probably well beyond that of the national average. Mr Speaker, if you start out west, at Arltunga, with the restoration work that has gone on there over quite some years, and then come in through the township, there is the Telegraph Station and the original Alice Springs hospital alongside the John Flynn church. In mentioning these, let me pay tribute not only to the government departments but also to those people in private organisations who have spent a great deal of time and effort on the restoration of these places.

There are also the original police station through the Gap, the cell block alongside the new courthouse, the Flying Doctor base and some of the original prison cells on the site now occupied by the Alice Springs Prison. Some of those buildings are fairly old. Out to the west, there is Hermannsburg. The list is fairly impressive and there are other buildings in Alice Springs that I have not mentioned, and that is not to say of course that there is not a need for more restoration. Let me say also that it is quite easy for us, as members of parliament, to jump up and down and talk about the need for restoration and preservation, but it is pretty hard yakka to get out there with your sleeves rolled up and work on such projects, and to raise the dollars required.

For 3½ years, I and many other people in Alice Springs were physically involved with the historic restoration of 2 of the most important events that ever occurred in central Australia. I refer to the old, narrow-gauge Ghan train and the Overland Telegraph line. Day after day, week after week, month after month, we made radio appeals for people to help us, and we got a tremendous turnout of Alice Springs residents and their families who came to assist us. It is interesting to note that, at one stage, at least part of that Ghan Preservation Society project is in the member for MacDonnell's electorate, but on not one occasion, from July 1985 through to when the project was opened, did we ever see the member for MacDonnell. He can bounce in here and attack governments, the Conservation Commission and everyone else for not working on restoration projects, but never at any stage did we see the member for MacDonnell out there with the backside out of his pants and his sleeves rolled up, planting trees, painting carriages or working at any restoration. Talk can be very cheap ...

A member: Outrageous.

Mr VALE: Yes, it is outrageous. It really is.

Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell introduced legislation in this House last year, if my memory serves me correctly, and it was slap-dash. It was one of the most incredibly inept pieces of legislation that I have ever seen.

Mr Bell: Did you read it?

Mr VALE: Yes, I did.

In his list of items that should be preserved, the member for MacDonnell was very careful to preclude some of the most important items, and they were all in his electorate. For example, one of the most important houses in central Australia is the Albert Namatjira Cottage, west of Hermannsburg. It was not mentioned. Not one of the historic buildings in the railway township of Finke was mentioned. Under his proposed legislation, it was required that if someone wanted to move anything that was listed, it would be necessary to obtain a court order. With a single wham, he hit the whole of the rail complex that has some of the most sophisticated state-of-the-art freight handling equipment in Australia. That would have meant that, if the railways had decided that a sophisticated fork-lift or crane was required at Port Augusta, it would have had to obtain a court order to move it. The railway had also said to the Ghan Preservation Society that it could take the old freight lift-over wagons out to MacDonnell. We would not have been able to shift them under the member for MacDonnell's legislation. That was the type of legislation that the then ALP spokesman for conservation was proposing to bestow on the Northern Territory. It was ill-considered, hastily put together and would have been very costly to implement.

Let me say that, over a long period and in conjunction with various community organisations and government authorities or commissions, the Northern Territory government has expended very considerable amounts of time and effort at great cost to preserve a vast list of historic man-made items across the Northern Territory. I think all of those people involved should be complimented on what they have done. I noted in particular that, in his comments, the member for Wanguri belittled the Conservation Commission for what he perceived to be its lack of expertise. I think the first thing the member for Wanguri should do is to get on his pushbike and have a look at some of the areas that the Northern Territory Conservation Commission has worked on. I believe that the officers of the commission deserve an apology from him.

The draft legislation that the Minister for Conservation has introduced has my total support. I welcome it, as I do his statement, and I look forward to circulating it widely through my electorate in central Australia and listening to the comments that come back in preparation for the compilation of the final bill. Mr Speaker, I support the statement.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the comments from the member for Braitling were absolutely extraordinary. This government has an appalling record for conservation of heritage places in Alice Springs. As I said at the time, the member for Braitling made similar comments when the opposition sought to preserve some buildings that were in danger in Alice Springs as well as elsewhere around the Territory and the honourable minister did absolutely nothing about it.

Let me pick out the example of the railway precinct that he was talking about. He is trying to tell me that the bill that the opposition proposed was vitiated because of a technicality about equipment in that precinct. Did the member for Braitling tell us about that at the time? No, he did not. The fact is that, if he had adopted a constructive approach to this issue, we might be a little further down the road than we are at the moment. This statement and this draft bill have been far too long delayed. The minister is attempting to climb on board 10 years too late. If this CLP government had

done something about heritage protection in the Northern Territory in 1980, 1981 or 1982, its members might be able to rise in the Assembly and say that they had a decent record in that regard, but for either the minister ...

Mr Vale: We have.

Mr BELL: ... or the member for Braitling to say that they can be proud of their record is absolute nonsense.

Mr Vale: What about the working bees, Neil.

Mr BELL: Let me just dispatch the comments of the member for Braitling for good and all, and I preface that by saying that I think his work with the Ghan Preservation Society is terrific.

Mr Vale: And everyone else's.

Mr BELL: I think it is wonderful that the member for Braitling has had so much spare time and that at least he has been able to devote it to constructive ends. I will not reflect on other non-constructive ends to which other government backbenchers have ...

Mr Coulter: What have you ever done?

Mr BELL: ... devoted their time.

Mr Vale: Talk about it. I will have a chat to you.

Mr Coulter: What have you done?

Mr BELL: I will point out to the honourable interjecting members that, on this side of the House, we have rather greater portfolio responsibilities, without the staff to back us up, to do the work that is necessary to keep this crowd opposite honest and to push ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the honourable member for MacDonnell to address honourable members as honourable members, not as 'this crowd opposite'.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, despite the extreme provocation that I received from them, I will refer to them as honourable members. Despite that provocation from honourable members opposite, I will desist from pointing out what their other spare time activities may be, but the spare time activities of the member for Braitling have been constructive. As for my presence or otherwise at the Ghan Preservation Society, suffice it to say that I am yet to receive representations from any of the members of the organisation or from the residents in that area. Should that happen, I would be more than happy to respond. In the meantime, I am quite sure that the Ghan Preservation Society is in good hands, which is probably the most positive thing I can say about the member for Braitling.

I would like to respond to the claim that heritage preservation in central Australia is in good hands. The Minister for Tourism suggested that, on a per capita basis, Alice Springs was doing pretty well. I am not quite sure what he meant by that or how he calculated it because he threw in that phrase without substantiating it in any way. I will point out to him, and this is the central point, that all the examples he referred to were publicly owned assets. The reason that the opposition has pushed the question of heritage legislation so hard is because the protection ...

Mr Vale: They were not all publicly owned.

Mr BELL: ... available for important privately-owned heritage assets has been appalling. The Minister for Tourism referred to the old Alice Springs hospital. He referred to Adelaide House. That is not a publicly-owned building. It is owned by the Uniting Church in Australia. Fortunately, it has been kept intact because the Uniting Church in Australia sees it as an important part of its presence in central Australia.

Mr Vale interjecting.

Mr BELL: I will just remind the Minister for Tourism that the destruction of Marron's Newsagency and the destruction of Turner House could have been prevented if members of the government had acted on the James Report of 1979. The Alice Springs central business district could have been considerably enhanced if the Ford Plaza complex could have been redesigned in such a way as to incorporate Turner House instead of its being smashed down overnight. We might have had something which fitted the central Australian environment a little more appropriately and made the central business district a little more appealing that it is at present. As it is, we have a hodgepodge. It is improving. Some of the planning measures that have been taken have improved it. But, by golly, that is no thanks to the people opposite. We have had a do-nothing, conservative, leave-it-to-the-developers government and the fact is that neither the Minister for Health and Community Services nor the Minister for Tourism has anything to be proud of in that regard.

Let me turn to the minister's statement. What absolute nonsense it is! He tables a draft Heritage Conservation Bill and discusses none of the issues involved. It is not until we reach page 10 of his 12-page statement that any of the issues arise. Even those issues are raised in such broad-brush terms that it is impossible to get any sensible idea of what makes this draft legislation special. The minister has done a pathetic job in attempting to convince this Assembly, let alone the electorate of the Northern Territory, the people of central Australia, and the people who used to like to go down to Myilly Point to look at a decent precinct, that members of the Country Liberal Party government have done anything at all to protect our heritage during the last 10 years.

Let us look at Myilly Point. I ask the honourable minister to comment on the absolute shambles the government has made of Myilly Point. It has had a multitude of grandiose development plans but what has it done? It took something of value, knocked it down and has done nothing with the area since. That is even worse than what happened in respect of the Ford Plaza in Alice Springs. It is even worse than the redevelopment of Marron's Newsagency in Alice Springs. At least the entrepreneurs who knocked down those buildings - and members opposite can tell them that I said here that I do not excuse them for having done so - subsequently did something constructive with the sites. The buildings at Myilly Point, however, have been razed and the area has been left. That reflects irresponsible public administration of the worst order and this statement is an attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of the Northern Territory electorate. It will not wash.

I have referred already to the James Report of 1979, which should have been acted on then. I will provide one caveat in that regard. The report contained an approach to heritage legislation which was relevant at the time but which would have required subsequent amendment. The issues which have been raised in the context of debate on this statement are worth while. During the late 1980s, we have seen the emergence of the concept of

encouraging owners of properties with heritage value to protect those properties themselves, rather than the government coming in with a big legislative stick. Contemporary legislation should reflect that approach and I look forward to closer study of this bill in the expectation that it will.

I note the comments made by the minister in respect of the Strehlow Collection. I am not sure that they are relevant in the context of heritage conservation legislation such as this, which seems to apply generally to the conservation of the built environment. I suppose the minister looked at his statement, saw that it was only 2 or 3 pages long and felt a need to pad it out with something. I simply put the minister on notice that there are serious concerns about the operation of the Strehlow Research Centre Act and I believe that more attention needs to be given to those concerns than the passing mention which he made of the matter in his statement. I will say no more in this context but simply refer to my comments in the debate on that legislation.

The honourable minister made great play about opposition input. His statement is so bereft of any historical perspective that it makes no mention of the James Report. It makes no mention of the debates initiated by the opposition in this Assembly. The minister then complained that there had been no opposition input. The fact is that, until we received this statement from the minister, there had been no government input on the issue.

I ask the honourable minister to read the comments by the former Minister for Conservation when he spoke in debate on the opposition's heritage bill last year. The then minister made all sorts of plays about not being able to move doors, repair windows and so forth. I wonder if the current minister has taken that on board. I suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that there is a serious conflict between the attitude taken by the current Minister for Conservation and his predecessor. I suggest that he read some of the nonsense which his predecessor came out with in that debate to see whether the comments made then about the opposition's legislation did not apply equally to the draft bill which the present minister has tabled. I note that there is no mention of that in the minister's statement.

I preface my comments on the provisions of the draft bill itself by saying that I intend to contribute further to this debate because it is an issue of personal interest to me, as well as an issue which has been among my responsibilities as a member of the opposition. I notice that the membership of the Ministerial Advisory Council referred to in clause 7 includes 1 position for the pastoral or mining industry and another for business or commerce. Clause 7(b)(iv) states that another 4 members shall be appointed for 'their professional expertise and experience in planning, architecture, engineering, archaeology, biology or geology, or such other expertise or experience as the minister thinks relevant to the administration of this act'. I am curious about how the government has arrived at such membership provisions. I notice, for example, that there is no specific reference to a person with expertise in tourism. I would have thought that, if we were talking about heritage protection, a specific understanding of the tourism industry would have been of great importance. I also wonder why there is such specific mention of the pastoral and mining industries and business or commerce when expertise in such matters as planning, architecture, engineering, archaeology, biology, geology and so forth is relegated to a virtual grab bag. There does not seem to be any particular balance in that regard.

I see that my time is running out. As I have said, I will take a keen interest in this legislation. As an active member of the National Trust who has taken a considerable interest in projects such as the Hartley Street School and so on, contrary to the absurd interjections from government members, I assure the government that I will continue to take an interest in this issue. I trust that, in future debates, we will have a little more substance from the minister with respect to the issues involved in the protection of the Territory's heritage and the built environment that is part of it.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I rise to place on record something which I believe to be very important. People become very emotional about preserving buildings and I wish to state clearly a position which I have held right from the very beginning. It relates to the matter of compensation to the owners of buildings which are deemed to be worth preserving in the public interest. I certainly do not believe that we should place a burden on people who happen to own old buildings or buildings of some architectural significance which are nearing the end of their commercial life. As the years roll by and technology changes, many old buildings that do not have air-conditioning and so forth become unprofitable. If there are reasons for preserving those buildings because of their architectural or historical significance and the contribution they have made to the Territory, then I say that has to be picked up by the whole Territory community, not by the people who happen to own the buildings. They should not be compelled to hang on to buildings which are not profitable or, if they have the desire to build something different there, then they should receive due and just compensation.

I am reminded by the honourable minister that our Self-Government Act does require this, although reading the headings of this draft legislation, one does not see it there. The heading that really caught my eye is clause 41, confiscation and forfeiture, which comes under the miscellaneous provisions. Certainly I hope that, where buildings are considered to be of such importance, the owners of the properties are justly compensated and that everybody is prepared through taxation to put their hand in their pocket and contribute to the preservation of those buildings. On its own, that will mean that not every building will be preserved, even though there are some people who seem to want to preserve any old building. They get very sentimental about it, and we had a good example of that from the member for MacDonnell today in respect of Marron's building. In any other town in Australia, I feel that there would have been very little support for the retention of Marron's Newsagency or even for Turner House. In north Adelaide, there is row upon row of Turner Houses. You can see them there and, if one of those were knocked down, nobody would turn an eye.

Of course, Turner House was in the heart of town and really I do think, as I have said before, that it was more the fact that it was a very good restaurant which served a very good meal in a very good atmosphere that had a strong influence on people's attitude rather than the actual building itself. In that regard, I am certainly pleased that a couple of residents of Alice Springs have taken over the old post office building on Railway Terrace next to Coles wall. It is a private affair. They have taken it over, spent a great deal of money on it and made it look really good. It is to become a restaurant. In fact, it has opened already, if my information and memory serve me correctly. I have not been there to have a meal and I must do so soon.

That is a project where private people decided that there was sufficient interest in the town to make a go of it, and maybe that stems from

Turner House. They have done a top job on it and spent considerable sums to modernise it and yet still keep the building close to the way it was when it was the postmaster's residence. It is now a top class asset to the town, and that was done with private money. I certainly welcome that, and I am sure every taxpayer would welcome it too, because the taxpayers have not been asked to contribute to that building. The owners believe that they will make a profit from it, and that is fine. I think that, wherever it can be done with some of the old heritage buildings around Australia, people are realising that they have an attraction of their own and that, by changing their function, they can make them profitable. That certainly is the best for everybody. The buildings will retain their basic appearance, but can still be made to make a dollar. In that way, they are preserved and the taxpayer is not hit again.

I will realise, as all members should, that the government, particularly these days, does not have a bottomless pit of money with which to save every tin shed around the traps. Mention was made today of the Hartley Street School. If you brought visitors from interstate or went up to tourists and asked what they thought about preserving that particular old tin shed, particularly the oldest part of the building, and told them that it would cost many thousands of dollars to do it, I believe that many people would ask what was so important about that building. If there is importance attached to it, it is for people who attended that school or families whose parents attended there. I can appreciate the likes of Mr Bernie Kilgariff feeling a real attachment to it. It was his school. A whole host of the older residents of Alice Springs feel very strongly about it. From an architectural point of view, do not try to describe it to me in terms of St Paul's Cathedral because a St Paul's it is not. It is like a tin shed. It is of historical interest. It is being preserved, but I bet there would be many people who, not knowing the older people of the town and not having a feeling for their pioneering spirit, would scratch their heads and say: 'I reckon you could have spent your money for heritage in a better way'. That is a comment by the way.

A member: Is there anything better in the Territory?.

Mr COLLINS: Yes, indeed there is. The honourable member wonders if there are things in the Territory that are worth preserving. Certainly, there are and many of them have been preserved - the old jail at Alice Springs, Arltunga etc. There is a whole host that the minister referred to in his statement. I do not think that the record of preservation of heritage items in the Territory for future generations is a bad one at all. I hope the day will come when the Ranger Uranium Mine is worked out. The legislation demands that it all be returned virtually back to the bush. The holes are to be filled in and the vegetation restored. I reckon the day will come when people will say: 'Hang on! This is an historically interesting and important site'. They may well consider that it would be far more sensible to keep it, particularly as it is only a few square kilometres in a park of many thousands of square kilometres. It will be something that people will say they want to see in order to be reminded of the part that it played in Territory history. They will feel that it should not be covered over and made to disappear off the face of the earth, as it were. I predict that the day will come when that will be an argument of some force.

I will make one comment on a remark that I overheard one member make. I am not absolutely sure who it was because I was listening to the loudspeakers. It was a remark about the Territory government not having listed anything with National Heritage since 1982. My attitude to that is somewhat the same as my attitude to World Heritage. A Premier of Tasmania at the time, a Mr Lowe, without even telling his Cabinet, was placing areas of Tasmania on the World

Heritage List. Not even his Cabinet knew. The parliament in Tasmania certainly did not have a chance to debate it. Of course, putting it in that arena virtually says that, if there is a change of government in the state, nobody can change anything.

To my mind, that is virtually saying that we are not mature enough to govern our own affairs, that we should put the matter into the hands of a national body or an international body in the case of the World Heritage List so that we could prevent a future government from doing anything with that land. That smacks of a lack of trust in the democratic process and the common decency and good sense of people in the country. It says that we are not grown up, we are not mature and we ought to be governed by an overseas body. As far as I am concerned, if the government has not listed anything with the National Trust as such at this stage, I do not object to that. I believe Territorians can look after their own affairs and do it well, and they do not need big brother looking over their shoulders.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate the minister for making this statement today. I received it only a little while ago and do not know the content of the draft bill. However, I believe it is appropriate to speak to the statement in general terms. It is of particular relevance to me because I believe my election to the seat of Flynn was based greatly on the fact that I took into account the wishes and feelings of the people of Alice Springs in regard to heritage. Whether you like it or not, the issues of Marron's Newsagency and Turner House in Alice Springs meant a great deal to Alice Springs people. I believe it is great that the minister has made this statement. I believe that issues involved with heritage legislation are quite complex.

One of the questions that immediately comes to mind is who selects the sites. Is it local people or the local council, the elected representatives, or should we include some of the older members in our community in relation to many of these heritage-type issues? Do we include architects to look at the architectural merit of buildings? There is the question of historical merit too. I recall that I went to Singapore at one stage and saw the site where the surrender at the end of World War II occurred. The building itself was not of great architectural merit, but certainly I believe that, for historical reasons, that site warrants preservation. I am not sure how we should actually retain things that have historical merit of that kind, but it is worthy of consideration.

The minister spoke at length regarding natural heritage and, once again, I would like to know who selects the sites. There is also the National Trust, of which I am a member, and its wishes need to be taken into account as well. The point that the member for Sadadeen touched on is what happens to owners of various properties, whether they be natural or otherwise, and whether the minister will consider the question of compensation. What can owners actually do if they decide to retain items of an historical nature which possess a heritage factor? Are they to be allowed to build, to renovate, to knock down part and retain part, or to repair? What materials are they able to use? Finally, what use can various heritage items or sites be put to? The other complex aspect that has to be faced is the kind of penalties the minister will consider.

I believe it is worth while going through the various vested interests in any heritage matter, and I will go through these at some depth. The first is developers. If we think about what developers actually require with respect to heritage conservation, what they need first and foremost are rules and



regulations. Are there height restrictions? What can be pulled down? Can they add additional buildings? Are they permitted to take down some parts of the buildings? What use can the buildings have? They need clear and precise guidelines ...

A member: They got those on Marron's.

Mr FLOREANI: Yes, but it did not work, did it? Maybe that is the penalty area. From the developers' point of view, they need simple and speedy processing of their applications. That is a factor that sometimes we do not think about. Another vested interest is the investors themselves and they are fairly easy to deal with. They require incentives to invest in properties like that, but how do you provide those incentives? Basically, they need good returns on investment and clear guidelines. If the legislation is to be structured to provide incentives for investors, we might be surprised by what might happen.

A member: Rate rebates.

Mr FLOREANI: Possibly. I do not know what other concessions could be given. In terms of ownership of heritage sites ...

Mr Collins: User pays.

Mr FLOREANI: 'User pays' is one interjection. The question is rather one of what owners can do in terms of repairs and so on.

The next vested interest is the architects. I believe that even they require no more than clear guidelines and simple procedures for approval of whatever they may be trying to do. They too need incentives to encourage them to design better buildings that are in keeping with the local area and local wishes. I guess they would like also to have flexibility in design.

The conservationists make up another group and they are interested in harmonious buildings and appropriate settings with trees and open space. Actually, my recollection is that all the formal processes were undertaken in relation to the Marron's site but, in the final analysis, plans were changed and the result was a public outcry. That cannot be allowed to happen again. The most important consideration is that the wishes of the local people in any area in the Northern Territory be taken into account. There must be some control for local people. In a nutshell, people like to be part of a town that they are proud of. They like to feel that their town is comfortable to live in, attractive to visit and retains its heritage.

I would like to compliment the minister. His intention seems to be to consult with as wide a range of people as possible. I commend him for that and I commend the draft bill which, obviously, will receive a great deal of public exposure.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, when it comes to heritage protection, I consider myself one of the purists in the game. I returned recently from a trip to Canada and the United States, where I had the pleasure of seeing authentic heritage. When I heard some of the nonsense about heritage protection put about by the member for Flynn during his campaign in the Flynn by-election, and when I hear from his fellow travellers on the opposition benches, it is clear to me that they devalue completely the term 'heritage protection'. I say that quite deliberately. I have a very genuine viewpoint which I have put on many occasions. If we are to preserve our

heritage, as we should, we should at least make all possible practicable attempts to do so authentically. In the case of Marron's Newsagency, the awning was about the only authentic remnant of the original building. I understand that the bio-box, which was about 3 m<sup>2</sup> and located in the middle of the building, was quite old but nowhere near old enough to be placed in the heritage category. It was about the only other component of the building which had any value at all. For the purpose of politicising the whole exercise, both the member for MacDonnell and the then Territory Nationals candidate for Flynn took it on themselves to beat it up into a major public issue.

People in the community are not fools. They know what genuine heritage means and I think we have to face the practicalities of the matter. I am pleased to see that, in his draft legislation, the Minister for Conservation has highlighted the need for a realistic balance between protecting appropriate heritage assets and enabling normal commercial and practical processes to proceed.

The member for Sadadeen made some very sensible comments about the need to safeguard individual property rights. I would suggest that honourable members take a real deep breath about this whole matter instead of becoming all goody-goody come-lately about what is good and what is not. We need to contemplate the sort of realistic legislation which should be in place in the Northern Territory. Such legislation should encourage rather than regulate private owners to use and maintain their heritage places. That is greatly preferable to bludgeoning people and imposing additional costs. There will always be a need for compromise in respect of the function of buildings. For example, old houses do not necessarily need to be used always for purely residential purposes. Whilst, as a purist, I have a desire to see old houses restored and retained in their authentic original condition, it may be necessary, due to valuation of properties and proprietary interests, to permit or even to encourage other uses of such buildings.

I do not wish to say much more on the matter. I will be adding my constructive pennyworth in debate on the honourable minister's draft legislation. I invite honourable members on the opposition benches, who have previously devalued and debased the term 'heritage protection', to get off their hobbyhorses and put in a fair effort on behalf of their constituents.

Motion agreed to.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Power and Water Authority Amendment Bill (Serial 236), the Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment Bill (Serial 241), the Criminal Code Amendment Bill (Serial 240) and the Crown Lands Amendment Bill (Serial 237) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

POWER AND WATER AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 236)  
WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 241)

Continued from 22 November 1989.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the bills. It seems to us to be eminently practical that the ability to make changes in this area be given to the management of the Power and Water Authority and therefore there is no real necessity for the powers to remain in the legislation. Normally, we do not assent so readily to urgency. However, we believe that it is essential that these measures be enacted as soon as possible. Whilst we could be petty and argue that the bills should have been presented at the last sittings, the fact remains that it is eminently sensible to allow the 2 areas to operate together, both in terms of checking the meters and issuing the bills. Mr Speaker, we support the legislation.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 240)

Continued from 22 November 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to indicate the opposition's support for this amendment to the Criminal Code. The issues associated with this were well laid out by the Attorney-General in his second-reading speech. The government is seeking urgency on this bill as a result of an application in June last year for the release of an habitual criminal. It was found that, in respect of the application, the court was unable to impose the conditions which it believed to be desirable. The purpose of this bill is to enable such conditions to be imposed.

There are a number of questions which flow from that. The Attorney-General raised a question in relation to the desirability of classifying people as habitual criminals. I am not sure whether the Attorney-General referred to the relative rarity of the application of that particular classification. I believe that only 2 people have been so classified in the Territory during the last 10 years. Even in more populous states, the classification is extremely rare as well. My recollection is that one could just about count on the fingers of one hand the number of occasions on which the Habitual Criminals Act of New South Wales has been used. If the provision has not actually fallen into desuetude, it is very rarely employed. As the Attorney-General mentioned in his second-reading speech, the reason for that is that courts and prosecuting authorities generally have a distaste for incarcerating people further when their sentences, and presumably their debts to society, have been expunged by way of a jail term.

The other side of the argument is, of course, that there may be offenders who cannot be released except at the risk of great danger to the public. I do not have a strong view with respect to that argument and, because of the infrequency of the application, I do not believe that it is much more than an academic debate. It may be important to look, at some stage, at the general question of the removal of this particular status and, in fact, the general application of non-judicial decisions with respect to people who have been dealt with by the courts. In that context, I think particularly of section 432 of the Criminal Code and the prerogative of mercy which is enshrined therein.

I express my thanks to the Attorney-General and his officers in the Department of Law who gave me a very thorough briefing with respect to this matter. In that context, reference was made to the fact that the use of the prerogative of mercy under section 432 of the Criminal Code is of doubtful application and the extent to which it operates with section 399 is somewhat doubtful. Clarification in that regard may be desirable even though the numbers involved are few and dealing with them on a case-by-case basis is not a difficult problem. However, that is a matter that will need to be resolved at some time in the future.

With respect to the particular case that came before the courts in June, it has been the subject of representations from the family of the person involved. They are very enthusiastic to see this bill passed and that the necessary conditions are placed on the person involved. For that reason, I have discussed with the Clerk the process for the commencement of this bill. Honourable members will note that the bill does not contain a commencement clause. I am assured that the commencement of this legislation, which would enable the necessary application to the courts by this particular person's counsel, should be able to be done as expeditiously as possible, given that the last appearance was before the Supreme Court in June this year. I indicate that the opposition supports the bill.

The other issue that I should mention in passing is a general requirement contained in clause 5. It requires a periodic report on people who are declared to be habitual criminals under that section of the code. I said earlier that people were declared habitual criminals under section 399 of the code. That is not the case. In fact, it is section 397. The regular report to the minister and to the legal practitioner acting on behalf of that person is an important reform. Reputation has it that the threat of being declared an habitual criminal or the threat of 'getting the key', as the expression has it in prisoner slang, was quite a potent deterrent. Whatever the value or otherwise of that deterrent may be, it is not desirable that such people be incarcerated without regular reports being made to the minister and to their legal representatives. I am not sure whether that report should not in fact come to the Legislative Assembly as well. I will not go to the wall on that because of the small number of cases involved, but I do raise the matter.

With those comments, I indicate the opposition's support for the amendment and our desire that it apply as soon as possible in respect of the matter brought before the Supreme Court in June this year.

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.

CROWN LANDS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 237)

Continued from 23 November 1989.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the opposition will support this legislation. However, we are surprised that it has taken until now for this matter to come before the House. In the committee stage of the original bill that passed through this House, the Chief Minister raised the matter of access and an amendment was made on that basis. One would have thought that, at that

stage, the government would have established the necessity of an amendment of this nature. It could have been dealt with at that stage. Unfortunately, this fits in with a pattern which is emerging in this whole process. The government has been continuing to find fault and to introduce little changes at the last minute. To date, these have been accepted by the federal government and I believe that this amendment in respect of access is also acceptable even though it means that the legislation will now have to go back to the House of Representatives again. It will further delay the legislation.

What is worrying me is the emerging pattern. In the original debate, I said to honourable members opposite that there should be no doubt about the federal government's commitment to have this process in place before the next election. I made that statement then and I make it again. Given the way events are emerging and the way the Chief Minister in particular has been handling this issue over recent weeks, there is a very real danger that he is putting the whole process at incredible risk. He is putting the whole of the federal government offside, and I am not talking only about people on our side of politics. I am talking about his own federal colleagues in the House of Representatives who are absolutely bemused by the actions of Senator Tambling and frustrated by the actions of the CLP on this issue. They are becoming extremely angry at the way that the whole business is going.

Because of his prevarications and the way that he has developed this process of constantly raising a need for further amendment, there is a very real danger that the Chief Minister will frustrate the federal government to the extent that the whole deal will be off and it will undertake the entire legislative process itself. That will be of no benefit whatsoever to anybody in the Northern Territory. That risk is increasing as a result of the prevarications of the Chief Minister. Let there be no doubt about what will happen if the federal government does that. Journalists from all major newspapers and from southern television networks will be coming here to report on the conditions under which the Aboriginal people involved have lived, how they have existed and how long that has continued. The blame will be sheeted home to the Chief Minister if he continues with this ridiculous program that he is pursuing. The federal government has bent over backwards to take amendment after amendment on board. This is merely the latest. This will have to stop. This government will have to start to fulfil some of its obligations. I believe that the answer to a question asked this morning indicated that the Chief Minister is about to try another one on. There are letters in which the Chief Minister said that those other changes cleared up absolutely the last of his problems. He is now gearing up for a new series of issues that he wants to take on.

The real core of the matter is the fact that there was an agreement which was operating in practice. The agreement was that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs was to deliver the land councils and the Aboriginal groups, and the Chief Minister was to deliver the pastoralists and the federal parties. That was how it was to operate. That was the agreement. The federal minister has persuaded the land councils to climb down from the position where they were talking only about federal title and holding on to their ability to lay claim to all the stock routes on the excisions. He has done that, but what about the Chief Minister and his commitment to deliver the pastoralists and the federal parties? Senator Tambling has made an absolute joke of him by taking issue on that. It is quite obvious that he is running out of control, as he always does, an unguided missile who goes around torpedoing goodness knows what without any regard for the consequences. Unfortunately, the Chief Minister, who was supposed to negotiate with the pastoralists so that the areas could be agreed on for scheduling, did not do his job because he did not

have the intestinal fortitude to go to the pastoralists and get them to agree on the areas. He would not take any of the hard decisions. He knows full well that the others have agreed to their part of it. He knows that those agreements are in place and he knows full well that he did not fulfil his part of the deal. Instead of talking to the pastoralists and carrying out the negotiations he was supposed to enter into, to deliver the federal parties, he walked out for either of 2 reasons.

The fact is that the federal minister has written to the Cattlemen's Association. He has talked to the Cattlemen's Association and has told it that matters of detriment will be handled. If any exist after the legislation goes through, they will be taken up. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has solved that problem, not the Chief Minister, whose job it was. The Chief Minister did not do it because he wanted to be able to come back here and score political points over this most important issue.

The federal minister has met with the land councils and advised them of his intention to take on board matters of detriment if any continue to exist. That has been done by him because the federal government wants to get the problem fixed. It was not done by the Chief Minister who does not have the intestinal fortitude to convene meetings with the people involved and take the hard decisions to sort out the problem. No, he decided what he would do, and that was for 1 of 2 reasons. One could have been simply that he knew that the federal government's intention was strong and it intended to put it through and therefore he thought he would hold back and throw rocks at the federal government over it when it did its part. Or, even worse, he hopes that by stirring the issue up and continually demanding amendments, it will get caught up in the busy schedule of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Senate will be sitting until the Friday before Christmas. He knows full well how difficult it will be to get this legislation through the Senate. He believes that he may be able to create a problem here and some trouble there and get it off the non-contentious list whereby, originally, it was supposed to have gone through with the agreement of the parties. He hopes to make it contentious so that it carries over into an election year and is subsumed, if you like, in the election rush. He is seeking to do that in the vain hope that the Liberal National Coalition will be elected and with the honest knowledge that, if it does, the whole matter will die and it will not resurface until there is a Labor government again in Canberra. That is the game that is being played. The Chief Minister has played it this way for one of those 2 reasons ...

Mr Vale: Can't you guess?

Mr EDE: Can't I guess? I think I could guess which side you would be on in this debate.

The fact is that the federal government has delivered and the Northern Territory government has shown that it cannot deliver. It cannot deliver and therefore is crying crocodile tears and has decided to start throwing rocks at the federal government. As I said, the government is running a very real danger that, if it keeps this up, the federal government will legislate on our behalf in respect of those stock routes and excisions. That would be a disgraceful shame. But, Mr Speaker, I would wear that before I would wear those people having to go through another 4 years of the kind of living conditions that they have had to put up with over the last 10, 15 or 25 years.

I doubt the bona fides of the Chief Minister, and I most certainly doubt the bona fides of some of his colleagues. His federal colleagues are becoming

increasingly frustrated by the actions of Senator Tambling and even more so by the failure of the Chief Minister to be able to deliver his side of the bargain. There was agreement between both sides in Canberra. They had made agreements that would enable them to get this through the Senate on the non-contentious list. The Chief Minister knows that, where something is contentious, the Democrats will not allow it to go through in a rush. They will want to talk every issue out and delay the process. An agreement was being worked out for the Liberal National Party and the Labor Party to push it through the Senate before Christmas. The way that the Chief Minister is stirring it up, by trying to get his colleagues in Canberra to walk away from it, will cause real problems in getting it through the Senate. He knows full well the ramifications of that and so do Territorians and the Aboriginal people who have been waiting far too long for land under this process.

Let us have a look at the whole basis of what he is talking about, the problems with those stock routes and excisions, the ones that he did not negotiate on with the pastoralists and so fulfil his side of the bargain. Let us look at what will happen if those go through and at what the federal minister has said. The federal minister has said, as I have been saying to pastoralists, that amendments in terms of the areas to be granted are possible right up until the death knock. Those are possible. If anybody comes up with an agreement and says that he has reached agreement on other areas as an acceptable compromise, that will be done. That has been said publicly and it has been said privately. It has been stated to the Chief Minister time and time again. He knows that for a fact and he knows that, even if it is not fixed at that stage and we reach the point where the act goes through and there are some areas which, for example, are not appropriate, that can be fixed later.

I can think of one in my electorate which, in my humble view, is not particularly appropriate and I would like another area of land instead to be granted to Aboriginal people. However, I am aware that there is no agreement on another area of land at this stage, but I know how the process can continue so that that difficulty can be solved later. If people obtain the scheduled block of land, all that is necessary afterwards is for them to come to an agreement with the pastoralists on another block of land. They can then lease back that original piece of land on the stock route to the pastoralists in return for an area of land elsewhere on the pastoral property. That can be done at any time after the legislation has gone through the federal parliament. There are no problems with that. It is simply a ...

Mr Manzie: The original legislation that went through the federal parliament is still waiting to be assented to.

Mr EDE: ... matter of delay, delay, delay. Delay it, and let us hope that, in the delay ...

Mr Manzie: Fancy getting your speech prepared by Mr Hand's office and reading it out here. What a sham!

Mr EDE: It would seem that the minister does not know what he is talking about in relation to this issue. Either he has been kept in the dark or he is one of the players for delay, delay, delay, because that is all it is. It is the vain hope of some of the honourable members opposite that, if they delay long enough, this process will die. It is a vain hope that there will be a Liberal National Party victory. The only thing certain is that, if there were, the legislation would die and I for one ...

Mr Coulter: The Liberal National Party has done more for Aboriginal land rights and sacred sites than any other government in Australia's history.

Mr EDE: ... am not going to allow anything like that to happen while I can still draw breath.

Mr Smith: What?

Mr Manzie: Well, they passed the Land Rights Act.

Mr Coulter: Who passed it in 1976? Who passed the Aboriginal Lands Right Act.

Mr Smith: But who put it in place?

Mr Coulter: Ah, but who passed it? Who put it through the parliament?

Mr EDE: Who put the Land Rights Act through? That was a case in point, Mr Speaker. Gough Whitlam's legislation was in the Senate and it did not get through because of the obstruction of your federal colleagues, the Fraser government, who got rid of the Whitlam government.

That mistake will not be made again. It is the last time that any Labor government will allow matters to be tied up in the Senate so that, when another election occurs, the whole thing is lost for years. No way is a Labor government going to make that mistake again. The legislation has to go through the Senate and then we have to see if people have any problems. As I said, the minister's door is open so that people can indicate any problems they may have. If solutions are negotiated at any time before the act is proclaimed, it has been agreed that those will be carried through in that process. If it happens after the proclamation, it will be able to be negotiated through the provision of lease-back or even by further legislative changes when a number of those have been worked out. Those matters can be worked out. As the federal minister has said time and time again, he will be taking up matters of detriment to ensure that no pastoral property suffers as a result of this legislation.

I do not know what the Chief Minister is on about. I hear his words, but I cannot follow the tune. All I hear is a jarring note in what should have been and what can still be an orderly progress towards correction of one of the greatest wrongs of the Northern Territory, something which is an embarrassment to the Northern Territory and something which should have been fixed up years ago. In this process, it should be fixed up without all this last minute attempt to play politics by turning around and passing the blame for lack of action by the Northern Territory government back to the federal government. This should be the end of it. I hope that the Chief Minister will back off now. He can have his say now and get it out in the open. He can get it off his chest and then let it go and get this legislation through parliament. Let us fix up the problem and let that be an end to it.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would like to add a few comments to the debate this afternoon, having regard to the tirade we have heard from the member for Stuart who, fairly clearly, had his little speech prepared for him in the federal minister's office. Not that I object to that. I appreciate that he is passing a communique back to this Assembly from the federal minister, and that is understandable.



He accused me of trying to cause problems by reneging on the deal and not upholding my part of the arrangement, and of trying to frustrate the passage of the legislation through federal parliament on the basis that, if the coalition parties win the next election, which I am sure they will, then maybe the whole problem will go away. I can assure him that I know that this problem will not go away, irrespective of the political parties in power federally. I am a realist and I can assure him that, as far back as the time of Chief Minister Everingham, this party was of the view that the needs of the Aboriginals who had been living formerly on pastoral leases and who still live on pastoral leases had to be addressed and, until such time as their needs were addressed, an inequitable situation would exist in the Territory, and government would not have fulfilled its full responsibilities. That has been our attitude all along.

We have cooperated on all those excisions that have been able to be negotiated between Aboriginals and pastoralists. We cooperated for years, before there was any memorandum between the Prime Minister and myself. Before there were any threats of scheduling land or threats of intervention by the federal government, these matters were proceeding, albeit at a fairly slow pace, with my government's cooperation and support.

I want this exercise to proceed, but I have a particular problem at the moment which does not stem from my not fulfilling my part of the bargain. Let me read for honourable members 2 quotations from the memorandum signed by the Prime Minister and myself. Bear in mind that all parties were supposed to act within the spirit of this document, indeed even within the letter of it - but, more particularly, within the spirit of it. At page 1, it says in fairly unequivocal terms in relation to the federal government scheduling land as schedule 1 land on stock routes: 'Scheduling will not take place where agreement has been reached that Aboriginals' needs can satisfactorily be met by a pastoral excision or a combination of part of the stock route claim with an adjacent excision'. Those words, 'scheduling will not take place', seem to be fairly unequivocal. That little step requires some consultation with the pastoralists.

The other quotation reads: 'There will be no scheduling in relation to those parts of claims which might unreasonably interfere with a pastoralist's interests; for example, by dividing a property or encroaching on the homestead'. Those parts of the memorandum are very important. Indeed, every part of the memorandum is very important. We hung on every single word of that document. That is why the Prime Minister gave 6 hours of his time staring across a table over every single word. I can assure you that it was not a frivolous chat over an afternoon cup of tea.

What has happened is that the federal minister has really been very poor in his advice to the Territory in relation to areas that he would schedule. Weeks after we concluded this agreement and after persistent requests, he gave us a batch of faxed, barely readable pages which had pictures of stock routes with squares on them on various properties throughout the Territory. This was his consultation with us. These were the areas he wanted to schedule. At that stage, he wanted to introduce the legislation within about a fortnight. It had taken all that time to obtain from him details of the areas that he proposed to schedule. We had flagged in Canberra weeks earlier, during the same negotiations that concluded the memorandum, that we had problems with many of the 35-odd areas that had been proposed formerly for scheduling. We certainly had trouble inasmuch as no one had been identified for any of them. No names had been mentioned. On many of these areas, no water studies had been undertaken. Indeed, some of the areas proposed to be scheduled may never

be occupied by man because people cannot live where there is no water. I do not care how long anyone has been around the country, he cannot live without water. However, all these factors seem to have been cast aside.

One of the scheduled areas was set well east of Alice Springs. It was a very large one. It must have been dozens of square miles. When we inquired on whose behalf this scheduled area was proposed, we were advised that it was on behalf of people who have since passed away. However, it is understood that they may have relatives in Queensland who have not been to the Territory but who may wish one day to settle on this land. We said to the Prime Minister that this nonsense is not meeting the legitimate needs of Aborigines who have resided in the Territory and are currently without land because they missed out under the Land Rights Act. The Prime Minister agreed with us readily.

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs said to me on the phone as recently as a week ago: 'I am not on about the weekenders. Scheduling of land is not for weekenders. It is to meet the legitimate residential needs of Aborigines'. However, the consultative process by the minister has been quite appalling. To put our views on the record, I wrote to the minister on 20 November. I am prepared to table the document if members so wish. I wrote to him along these lines: 'I am comfortable with your legislation provided that you amend section 15 to remove that access provision'. This is being replaced by the very bill that we are debating today. 'However, we are flagging to you a grave concern about the schedules that do not fit the rules. Unless scheduling is done in good faith, then you will not have the cooperation of the pastoralists who know what the memorandum says'. The pastoralists support the memorandum. They thought it was a great document which would resolve a long standing issue that they want resolved. All they want everybody to do is abide by it.

I flagged to the federal minister that the schedules to his legislation that is currently before parliament would create problems. We listed 27 items that were attached to the schedules. There are 1 or 2 with which we have no problem. However, in respect of others, there is a whole raft of problems. I will not go through them today. I will table them if honourable members opposite wish me to. I am prepared to do that because they indicate that some of the areas simply should not be in the schedules.

Mr Ede: You had the bill 3 weeks ago, with all the schedule areas.

Mr PERRON: That is right, and we have written to the federal minister advising him of the rules of the game. The schedules do not fit in with them.

Mr Ede: On 22 November?

Mr PERRON: On 20 November.

Mr Ede: Despite the time frame that we have on this matter, it took you 3 weeks.

Mr PERRON: Under the memorandum, it was clear that the minister had to undertake consultation with the pastoralists.

Mr Ede: You were going to undertake the consultation with the pastoralists.

Mr PERRON: What a load of drivell! The member for Stuart says that I was to do the consultation. I would have to negotiate, not consult. I would have to say to a pastoralist: 'This is the federal government's proposed excision. Let us see if you can offer another area and the federal minister will withdraw this'. It is impossible. Only the federal minister can do that.

Mr Ede: He has said publicly and privately to you and to us that, if you obtain agreement on an alternative, he will wear it even now and right up until it goes through.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, it is quite clear that the negotiation with individual pastoralists has to be done with land council representatives or at least with local traditional claimants and with an officer directly responsible to Minister Hand who has the final say in this matter. Indeed, the Northern Territory government is the one party that is not necessarily a party to the negotiations in respect of scheduled areas. However, we would take an interest in the matter because those areas that will end up alienated as a result of scheduling are Northern Territory Crown land in the form of stock routes.

I reject inferences by honourable members opposite that I am attempting to impede the federal minister's legislation. I can assure honourable members that it is my understanding that the cattlemen of the Northern Territory, who have now become aware of the areas proposed to be scheduled, are quite alarmed. A number of them are saying that, if the schedule proceeds, it will seriously affect the viability of their properties. That is totally contrary to the memorandum.

Mr Ede: Hand said that, if that is put up, he will fix it.

Mr PERRON: Why didn't he fix it before he scheduled it?

Mr Speaker, I have no more to add really. I wanted to put the record straight in that regard. I hope that the legislation is passed through the federal parliament. I hope that the minister amends his schedules, and I am sure he can do that, to show some good faith to the cattlemen who are gravely concerned. All they have been told at present is that there are undertakings from the land councils that they will not inhibit access unreasonably and that they will allow access to bores etc on scheduled areas. The cattlemen are gravely concerned. The last information I had is that no such undertakings by the land councils have been seen in writing. The cattlemen are concerned about the legal standing of such undertakings. We are talking about people's livelihood, and properties that have been with some families for generations. They have every reason to be gravely concerned that a man in Canberra is drawing squares in the middle of a map of their property and attaching it to legislation, saying: 'Don't worry, all will be well'. I have some sympathy with their view. I conclude by saying that all they and we ask is that the terms of the memorandum be adhered to, and those terms are unequivocal.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to, bill read a third time.

STOCK DISEASES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 233)

Continued from 23 November 1989.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, at the outset, I would like to thank honourable members and make a few comments in response to a number of points that were raised. I would like to cover some of the points made by the member for Stuart and comment on some remarks he made in relation to a letter from the federal member Warren Snowdon to the federal Minister for Primary Industries, John Kerin, in relation to the culmination of the BTEC program and the impact of the proposed 1992 deadline on the buffalo industry. The federal member wrote also to myself in relation to this matter. I was concerned to note that the detail and contents of the letter that he wrote to me were different from that which he wrote to the federal minister. It made me wonder about his intentions and whether he was pursuing some point in relation to the buffalo industry or simply undertaking some politically motivated action. I suspect that the latter may have been the case.

I think that the federal member, along with the member for Stuart, is unaware of the implications of the actions which he proposed in his letter to the federal minister and the requests which it contained. The letter which he sent to me was much briefer and did not expand on the extent of the proposal which he put to the federal minister. I think that there are a number of points which the cattle industry and the buffalo industry should be very concerned about. The most disturbing factor was that the letter came at a very sensitive time. It was written in December. The Northern Territory will have a submission before the National BTEC Committee seeking to extend the provisionally free areas currently declared in the Northern Territory. Of course, the effect of this would be to accrue benefit to those pastoralists who will fall out of an eradication area into a provisionally free area. It is most disturbing for the federal member and the member for Stuart to be calling for the cessation of parts of the BTEC program at this particularly sensitive time.

Mr Speaker, you can imagine the attitude of members of the National BTEC Committee who will be assessing the Northern Territory's application for extension of the provisionally free area, and their concern that a member of the federal parliament has asked the federal minister to cease certain actions in relation to our BTEC program. Naturally, they will be asking themselves just what is going on in the Northern Territory, given that the federal member has been asking such questions, and they will wonder whether there is something behind the actions of the industry and perhaps the government of the Northern Territory in relation to BTEC. Fortunately, members of the National BTEC committee are alert to the poorly-structured and vindictive campaign mounted by the member for Stuart in relation to BTEC in the Northern Territory and, lately, by the federal member.

Yesterday, on the ABC Country Hour, the member for Stuart supported the call by the federal member contained in his letter to the federal minister. That was much to his shame and should be of concern to all pastoralists in the Northern Territory. I have written to the federal minister in relation to this matter and I have responded to the federal member's letter to me. I will read that response into Hansard. My letter is dated 24 November and reads as follows:

Dear Mr Snowdon,

I am in receipt of your letter dated 23 November 1989 and a copy of your letter to the Hon John Kerin MP regarding your call for a moratorium on the current shoot-out of buffalo under the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign.

The views expressed in your letter are representative of a sectional minority within the Territory's buffalo industry. They do not have the support of the Buffalo Industry Council, the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association or the Northern Territory government. I would also suggest that there is little, if any, support for your call within the Australian Agricultural Council.

Your letter to Mr Kerin, in particular, shows a lack of understanding of the BTEC program in the Territory. I note that neither you nor your Territory colleague, Mr Brian Ede, who has been an active and mischievous opponent of BTEC, have as yet sought briefings from the officers engaged in the conduct of the campaign. This lack of objectivity on your part gives you no credit in your role of purportedly representing all of the people of the Northern Territory.

A number of the points raised in your letter to Mr Kerin require comment. I agree there has been a good deal of public comment regarding the administration of BTEC. Most of this, however, has been raised by either the minority opposed to BTEC or your colleague who has engaged in a campaign of seeking to score cheap political points. The various allegations of so-called maladministration and corruption have been investigated by the police and have so far been found to be without foundation.

In support of the Buffalo Industry Council's stated support for the program, all buffalo producers have signed current programs and have agreed to the destock of infected, uncontrolled areas.

In relation to evidence for the transmission of tuberculosis between buffalo and cattle, the sort of field trial work I presume you refer to has not even been conducted to show transmission between cattle. The campaign itself is based on epidemiological principles which indicate a strong case for cross-infection between the species.

The reliability of the skin test has been of concern to all parties involved in pursuing the campaign, not just the buffalo industry. Recent research to establish the effectiveness or otherwise of the gamma interferon test has demonstrated, however, that the skin test is at least as effective in buffalo as it is in cattle. It is relevant to note that most of our current overseas markets for buffalo require a test. Indeed, I understand that, as of 1992, the European Common Market may no longer accept animals from TB-infected areas.

The moratorium you propose will be of no benefit to the Territory's buffalo producers. Through their own hard work and with direct assistance from the Northern Territory government, they are developing the nucleus of a viable domesticated buffalo industry. Their achievements have reached the stage where it is essential that we protect the 2 elements critical to the future of the industry. These are firstly the monitored-negative feral herds, particularly in

the Bulman area. The industry is urging we protect them as a source of breeding stock. The second element is the stock already established behind wire. Both groups must be protected from contact with infected animals.

Recent aerial surveys indicate approximately 70 000 head of buffalo make up the uncontrolled monitored-negative herds, while only about 5000 head of infected stock remain to be destocked. These latter buffalo are mostly spread over isolated areas and as such are not economically musterable. The risks associated with their presence are unacceptable to our local producers and it is therefore imperative that they be removed as quickly as possible.

Having regard to the overall situation of BTEC in the Northern Territory, it is not my intention to accede to your request.

The matters addressed in that letter in response to the federal member clearly illustrate the seriousness of his actions and the imposition which could be placed on the industry in the Northern Territory if his request were to be acceded to. Both the federal member and the member for Stuart have been grossly irresponsible in calling for this action. I have been so concerned about it that, last week, I wrote to some 110 pastoralists in the impending-free area in the southern region of the Northern Territory expressing my concern in relation to the actions of the member for Stuart and the federal member and pointing out the possible consequences that could flow from the implementation of the measures they proposed.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr REED: Needless to say, I confirmed to the pastoralists in the impending-free area that the commitment of the Northern Territory government stands fast in relation to the BTEC program, and that the work which those pastoralists have put into the program over the past 15 to 20 years will be safeguarded. It is all very well for the member for Stuart to put that effort at risk, together with the financial commitment made to the program over many years by Centralian pastoralists, with his flippant remarks and his calls to disband BTEC. To disband the buffalo program would do no good for the buffalo industry. Member countries of the European Common Market are considering banning the supply of products from diseased animals in other member countries in 1992. If they intend to ban the import of products from their own member countries, I am sure that they will not be expecting to accept products from diseased animals in other countries such as Australia. That shows the serious nature of the position in which the member for Stuart would seek to place producers in the Northern Territory.

Mr Ede: Have you got something from the EEC to back that up?

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, I table copies of my correspondence with Hon John Kerin, the federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, and Hon Warren Snowdon MP, and a copy of the letter that I have sent to pastoralists in the impending-free area.

One of the disappointing aspects of the comments made by the honourable members is that they tended to regard this bill as a BTEC bill. That is unfortunate because the intention of the bill is much more far-reaching than that. It is intended to put in place a mechanism for the Northern Territory to address the unfortunate circumstances which might arise in the case of an outbreak of an exotic disease. The bill will address all disease situations and, importantly, exotic diseases.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You ought to tell that to some of your departmental officers.

Mr REED: I have had a talk with some of the officers who may have had a talk to you, and I am not sure that you have not misconstrued a few things. However, I will come to that later.

Mr Speaker, for the advice of honourable members, the position in the states is that legislation comparable to this already exists in Queensland. The New South Wales Stock Diseases Act provides powers for inspectors to order destruction of stock which are infected or suspected by the inspector of being infected, and similar legislation exists in the other states. This is in recognition of the importance to the economy of the direct financial impact an outbreak of an exotic disease would have on our primary industries, not only in terms of the effect on producers but also the wider impact on the state, Territory and national economies. To illustrate the nature of that impact, I refer to the 1985 outbreak of fowl plague in Victoria which is the most recent significant exotic disease outbreak in Australia. The cost of slaughter and disinfection of infected stock near Bendigo totalled \$2.2m, half being operational costs and half being compensation. Industry losses due to restrictions on movement, particularly interstate, were estimated at \$600 000 per week. Movement restrictions remained in place for 3 to 6 months resulting in total industry losses in the order of \$10m. As with most exotic disease outbreaks, the cost to industry far exceeded the direct cost to government. This would be the case with any significant exotic disease outbreak in the Northern Territory.

The legislative framework proposed in these amendments would give us the opportunity to deal swiftly with such circumstances and to act very promptly. It is also relevant at this stage that I quote the federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Hon John Kerin, whose press release of 12 October in relation to exotic disease preparedness in Australia stated:

Mr Kerin said the government had recently presented legislation to the House of Representatives providing for a new Exotic Animal Diseases Preparedness Consultative Council made up of representatives from government, industry and groups of special expertise in advising on the most effective and appropriate preparedness activities. The establishment of the council recognises that exotic animal disease preparedness cannot be a static exercise. We need to be constantly re-evaluating the implications of changes in possible disease entry paths and the dispersal of host animals within Australia, and of new research results.

I think the important point for the Territory in those comments by the federal minister is that the Territory is very much in the front line of opportunities for the introduction into Australia of exotic diseases. We cannot afford to be in a position where, if there is an outbreak of an exotic disease, we have to come to this House to seek amendments to enable us to act to control it. Any delay, even a matter of hours, could have catastrophic consequences for the primary industries of the Territory and, of course, subsequently Australia. I make those points to reaffirm in the minds of honourable members that the bill has consequences far beyond the BTEC program.

I turn now to issues raised by honourable members in the debate, and commence again with some matters mentioned by the member for Stuart. At page 76 of the unrevised Hansard for 23 November, the member for Stuart said: 'Let us look now outside of proposed part VA. Section 42 of the principal act

is contained in part V. Clause 5 of the bill seeks to amend section 42, Powers of an Inspector'. I think that there the honourable member was, in fact, referring to part VII. Is that correct?

Mr Ede: Sorry?

Mr REED: Section 42 is in part VII, not in part V.

Mr Ede: Yes, that is right. Section 42 is in part VII. That is what I said.

Mr REED: But you said part V. Are you happy with that?

Mr Ede: Yes. Although I am a bit worried if I am asked to be happy.

Mr REED: Another comment made by the member for Stuart was that: 'The fact is that the same power exists with the Chief Inspector of Stock who, if he carries it out must, under this amendment, pay just terms in his compensation. The same requirement has not been placed on the stock inspector because the requirement relates only to proposed new part VA'.

Mr Speaker, the power under section 42(1)(a) is and remains the power to enter, and I think ...

Mr Ede: No, it is all of 42. Yes, you are right there.

Mr REED: It currently exists and ...

Mr Ede: Section 42(1)(b) is 'destroy or to be destroyed'. It is section 42, isn't it?

Mr REED: That is right, and it remains unchanged. Therefore, you do not have any problem? You concede that?

Mr Ede: Yes. You know what you have said.

Mr REED: You do not have any problems there and you concede that. I will move to the next point.

The honourable member went on: 'Why are we saying only that when the actions of the Chief Inspector of Stock result in the need for compensation to be paid, that compensation has to be paid on just terms? ... However, to avoid any doubt the minister has placed it in the amendment. However it does not apply to other parts'. I believe that compensation will be payable under proposed section 34(a) and proposed section 34(b). It will protect stock owners by allowing them to appeal to the court if they believe that compensation has not been paid on just terms.

Further, the member for Stuart made the comment: 'I personally have some problems in coming to grips with the amendments to section 42'. He was referring to the powers of a Chief Inspector of Stock and his ability to delegate power to a stock inspector, and why it should be necessary to give a stock inspector a carte blanche right to go on to a piece of land. There is no power in proposed section 28 for the stock inspector to enter any land. He will rely on the existing power of entry under section 42(1)(a), which I have just referred to. With a major disease program, it is necessary to have power of entry, not only to implement control measures, but to determine if stock are infected or at risk before deciding what control measures are necessary.



At page 79 of the uncorrected Hansard, the honourable member referred to the Exotic Diseases (Animals) Compensation Act and said that, in this debate, we were talking about the Stock Diseases Act. The exotic diseases legislation only specifies the compensation process. It does not deal with the activities required of officers leading up to the eradication. In fact, the Exotic Diseases (Animals) Compensation Act relies first on action under section 42 of the Stock Diseases Act, as outlined in section 4(2) of the Exotic Diseases (Animals) Compensation Act. Mr Speaker, if the honourable member has a copy of the Exotic Diseases (Animals) Compensation Act with him ...

Mr Ede: I have.

Mr REED: I refer him to section 4(2) which says:

For the purposes of this ordinance an animal which dies on land which at the time of the death is in a quarantine area established under the Stock Diseases Act in order to prevent the spread of an exotic disease shall be deemed to have been destroyed immediately before the establishment of the quarantine area in the exercise of a power under section 42 of that ordinance by an inspector having reasonable cause to believe that the animal is or has recently been suffering from or infected with an exotic disease, if an inspector certifies in writing that in his opinion there are reasonable grounds to believe that the animal died from an exotic disease.

Mr Ede: You have a very old copy.

Mr REED: The Stock Diseases Act provides officers with the ability to put in place and to take control measures, whereas the Exotic Diseases (Animals) Compensation Act simply details the compensation that applies to such action. The member for Koolpinyah raised the same question.

At page 79, the member for Stuart raised the point that a stock inspector will have the power to go on to land or enter any building for the purposes of testing or destroying, and a range of other things. In the Stock Diseases Act, section 42(1)(d) states that the stock inspector must have reasonable cause to believe that there is an infection or disease before destroying any stock. The member for Stuart is correct in his statement, provided he recognises that the provision relates only to the stock inspector's power of entry. The proposed change relates only to the power of entry on to land to carry out actions as set out in proposed new section 28.

Mr Ede: Why didn't you change (b)? You cannot muster to destroy.

Mr REED: 'Without assistance to muster or order to be mustered any stock for the purpose of inspecting, treating or seizing the stock?'

Mr Ede: You changed enter so that an inspector can enter to destroy. That was to make that clear.

Mr REED: Yes.

Mr Ede: You did not change muster so that they can muster to destroy.

Mr REED: The power exists already.

Mr Ede: No, it does not.

Mr REED: For the purpose of inspecting, treating or seizing the stock.

Mr Ede: Yes. You should have amended that one too in order to be consistent.

Mr REED: I think that the power to destroy exists under other parts.

Mr Ede: Yes, but you cannot muster for the purpose.

Mr REED: If you intend to destroy them, you have to muster them first.

Mr Ede: I know, and that is what I am saying. You could end up with an awkward situation. If you had problems with entering, you will have the same problem with mustering.

Mr REED: I will pursue that for you. I think that it is covered elsewhere under section 42.

Mr Ede: There are lots of them.

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart raised the point and dwelt on it for some time, as I recall, as to why, after giving this person incredible powers which are not shared by his boss, the stock inspector can do these things and not pay on just terms. I refer the member for Stuart to section 9(1) of the Stock Diseases Act which states: 'The Chief Inspector is, in the exercise of his powers and the performance of his duties and functions under this act, subject to the direction and control of the minister'. Section 9(2): 'The Chief Inspector has all the powers conferred on an inspector by this act'. I think that, despite the honourable member's protestations, the Chief Inspector of Stock has the same powers as an inspector, and the conflict that he was alluding to ...

Mr Ede: The inspector does not have all the powers ...

Mr REED: Sorry?

Mr Ede: The other thing does not work. Just terms have to be paid for what the Chief Inspector has done but it does not necessarily follow that just terms have to be paid for what the inspector does.

Mr REED: We will get to that later.

Mr Ede: All right.

Mr REED: What you are talking about here is that an inspector has powers in excess of those of his boss, and that is incorrect, as I say, and as outlined in section 9(2).

Mr Ede: I see.

Mr REED: The honourable member raised the question of 20 000 head of cattle that are currently being shot between the Fitzmaurice and Daly Rivers. He indicated that he has it 'on good authority that no beast infected with TB or brucellosis has ever been detected in that area before'.

Mr Ede: Not brucellosis.

Mr REED: I am using your words: 'I have written to the honourable minister asking him for details of the proposed shoot-out'.

Mr Speaker, the honourable member is correct in stating that there is a shoot-out under way in that area. It has been conducted over the last couple of years. The number of animals that he refers to is correct, but it relates to the number over a couple of years, not just this year. I think the important point to note is that there has been an incidence of disease and the honourable member is incorrect in saying that there has not been. In fact, the whole area is considered suspect. It is suspect because of the incidence of disease.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: How many animals have got it? The area is inaccessible. How many animals have been proved positive?

Mr REED: There are uncontrolled animals. They are diseased and ...

Mr Ede: It has never been established.

Mr REED: It has been established. If they are diseased, they are diseased. If diseased animals constitute a threat to neighbouring herds, then there is little alternative but to use the program and clear the diseased animals from the area concerned. Some of these cattle have been cleared out of those areas for some years and, clearly, in some instances we are talking about residual animals in areas that are very hard to muster, and whether or not it would be economically viable to get those animals out of there is very much open to question.

Mr Ede: We are doing it all the time.

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart raised again the question of pigs and the possibility of TB being transferred from feral pigs to cattle and buffalo. This subject has been canvassed a number of times by the member for Stuart and, indeed, a few other people. He seems ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Not by me.

Mr REED: Yes, and the member for Koolpinyah.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: No, I have not said TB is transmissible from pigs to cattle.

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, I have indicated on a number of previous occasions that similar conditions exist elsewhere. I think I gave the example of the Macquarie Marshes in central western New South Wales and there are certainly similar areas in Queensland where this problem exists. Nonetheless, under the BTEC program, the eradication of disease has been successful, and the transmission of TB from feral pigs to cattle and buffalo has not been proven. In fact, as I have indicated before, bovine TB manifests itself in quite a different way in pigs compared to the way it appears in cattle and buffalo. I am advised that the spread of disease between buffalo and cattle occurs in the soft portions of the animals. All field evidence indicates that the disease is transmitted from cattle to buffalo and from buffalo to cattle, and I have indicated previously also that, where there is an incidence of TB in cattle, there is a similar level of incidence in buffalo herds and the evidence is that the prevalence of the disease is the same in buffalo as it is in cattle.

If the member for Stuart maintains that TB can be passed from feral pigs to buffalo or cattle, I find it surprising that he puts forward the suggestion that it cannot be passed from buffalo to cattle.

Mr Ede: Not proven.

Mr REED: They have the same disease and it manifests itself in the same way. Epidemiologically, the facts are there. I doubt that the member for Stuart will ever accept that, but that is the situation. From the point of view of the program, there is no alternative to pursue.

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

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries be granted an extension of time to complete his remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart made a couple of other points including a suggestion that the Marrakai Flora and Fauna Reserve, which is now clear of buffalo, be re-stocked with a camera herd. I think that we should look at the options of producers in relation to camera herds. I have no doubt that the option will exist as producers buy up more stock. Of course, they have land adjoining major tourist routes and I believe the opportunity will arise for herds of feral domesticated buffalo to serve also as camera herds. I would oppose the use of the Marrakai Flora and Fauna Reserve for that purpose. I believe that the opportunity to monitor that ecosystem is of greater value than the running of a camera herd in the area.

Mr Speaker, the last point raised by the member for Stuart concerned the reasons for treating buffalo differently to mustered stock which have reacted to a test of a type. The reason for treating buffalo differently in relation to compensation is that it is what the Buffalo Industry Council requested. As I recall, the reason for that was that there is no well-established market value for buffalo. Agreement was reached in relation to compensation, in consultation with the Buffalo Industry Council. That is indicative of the extent to which the department has gone to reach agreement with the Buffalo Industry Council, the Cattlemen's Association and producers generally. The Buffalo Industry Council and producers sought a classification of animals by which the value could be determined, with compensation to be paid on that value. Therefore, the decision came about in response to an industry request. Rather than take the time of honourable members by going through all the details, I will provide a copy of them to the member for Stuart so that he is fully aware of the situation.

The member for Barkly raised the question of stock and compensation. He was correct in saying that we have a panel to determine compensation rates. There is, in fact, no payment for bush stock at present so I am not sure exactly what the honourable member was getting at in that respect. I think I have covered most of the points raised by the member for Koolpinyah in relation to the test. If she has any other matters to raise, perhaps she will do so in the committee stage.

In closing, I indicate that, whilst I am of the opinion that the concerns of the member for Stuart in relation to the payment of compensation and other matters are covered in the legislation, the amendments proposed by the honourable member will be accepted simply in order to provide reassurance to the industry.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 93.1.

The purpose of this amendment is to omit the proposed section 34B to make room for a further amendment which I will be moving at a later stage. Honourable members have heard me canvass this issue and they have heard the honourable minister's very gracious response. I think that it is probably for the betterment of everybody that this amendment be passed. I am certainly not going to say anything which could be construed as my gloating over the one amendment I have been able to propose successfully during 6 years in this place. Mr Chairman, I certainly do not want to run the risk of talking the minister out of it.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 7 agreed to.

New Clause 7A:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 93.2.

This amendment inserts a new section 47A requiring acquisition to be on just terms. As honourable members know, its purpose is to ensure that all acquisitions of property under the Stock Diseases Act are pursuant to the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act and are carried out on just terms, as from the commencement of this act on 1 January 1990.

New clause 7A agreed to.

Remainder of bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

I rise in the adjournment tonight to address questions which I was asked by the member for Arnhem and the Leader of the Opposition in question time this morning. The questions related to Malak House. In particular, the Leader of the Opposition asked:

Can the honourable minister confirm that teenagers held at Malak House have been kept in solitary confinement for up to 2 days and, in one case reported to me, for up to 4 days, despite the fact that departmental regulations provide for a 12-hour maximum solitary confinement period?

I was unable to respond to that question because, at the time, I had not seen a letter which the member for Arnhem said that he had sent to me. Also, one becomes somewhat cautious in relation to suggestions and allegations made by members of opposite. In the past, some have been what can best be described as frivolous. However, I would like to make a few points now in relation to the question from the Leader of the Opposition.

The use of time-out or isolation areas at Malak House adheres strictly to the Juvenile Justice Act which specifies periods of no more than 12 hours. Internal procedures relating to the use of the time-out room are strictly followed to ensure the well-being of detainees placed in isolation or time-out. Time-out is used where a detainee poses a risk to himself, other detainees or staff, or where his behaviour is inappropriate. The detainee is checked at least every 15 minutes to monitor his or her well-being. At no time are detainees at Malak House Detention Centre held in the time-out room for more than 12 hours. Every time a detainee is placed in the time-out room, this is recorded in a register detailing the exact times for which detainees are held and recording the justification for the action. As a security precaution, detainees' clothes are locked away prior to their being secured in the dormitory for the evening. Female detainees are provided with a nightie. However, the majority of male detainees prefer to sleep in their underpants.

The member for Arnhem also raised several points in relation to this matter. Indeed, he referred to a letter which he sent to me yesterday containing serious allegations about conditions at Malak House. They were outlined in a signed statement from a previous inmate. I would like to cover a few points in relation to that. In doing so, I will not disclose the name of the person concerned. However, I am concerned that the member for Arnhem has raised the issue in this way, despite the fact that he had sent a letter to me which was delivered only yesterday. I would have thought that he might have allowed time for a response at least or perhaps approached me in relation to this matter.

The person concerned was sentenced on 1 August to 3 months detention for numerous property offences. He absconded while on day leave for work experience on 17 October 1989 and was later apprehended. He alleged that he had been mistreated by other detainees at Malak House. Immediately following these allegations, police and internal investigations were conducted and, in fact, the police investigations are still continuing.

As I have said, the use of time-out isolation areas at Malak House adheres strictly to the Juvenile Justices Act. Internal procedures relating to the use of time-out rooms are followed strictly. The person concerned did in fact spend short periods in the time-out room, primarily as a result of attacks, both verbal and physical, on Aboriginal staff and detainees. The only time that the Leader of the Opposition came close to the truth in his allegations was when he referred to the fact that he was advised that the person concerned was detained in the time-out area for 2 days and, in once instance, for up to 4 days.

What in fact happened was that the detainee was in a time-out room on 5, 6 and 7 August. On Saturday 5 August, he was in the time-out room from 1235 hours to 1500 hours, a total of 2 hours and 25 minutes. On Sunday 6 August, he was there from 0730 hours to 1240 hours, which is 5 hours and 10 minutes and, on Monday 7 August, he was there from 0700 hours to 1340 hours, a total of 6 hours and 40 minutes. He also spent time in the time-out area on 13, 20, 24 and 26 August. The periods spent there were 47, 15, 10 and 10 minutes respectively. The fact is that, in this case, and in all other cases, the

time-out room has been used according to the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act.

As I have said, the person was placed in time-out primarily as a result of his attacks, both verbal and physical, on Aboriginal detainees and staff. He absconded whilst on work experience on day leave to the Millner Primary School. His parents were spoken to by the Assistant Director, Juvenile Justice, and the Manager, Juvenile Justice Programs, at the time of his interview by police in regard to offences allegedly committed whilst at large.

Because of the seriousness of the allegations made by the detainee in his statement regarding his treatment by other detainees at Malak House, the Manager, Juvenile Justice Programs, successfully applied to the court for his bail release to allow time for a full police and internal investigation into the matter. Officers of the department have operated in an extremely responsible and professional way in relation to this matter. The matter concerning allegations of assault by other detainees was immediately handed over to the police and, as investigations are ongoing, I cannot comment further on that aspect at this time.

An internal investigation by the Department of Correctional Services was also implemented immediately. As a result of interviews with staff and detainees and a check of Malak House records, the following points emerged. There have been numerous incidents recorded where the detainee has taunted and antagonised other detainees and staff, especially those of Aboriginal descent, resulting in a very poor relationship between that detainee and other detainees. Investigations reveal that the detainee may have a propensity to fabricate situations in which he is portrayed as a victim. Following the preliminary investigation carried out by the Manager, Juvenile Justice Programs, and the Superintendent, Malak House, the detainee's parents were fully briefed. The detainee remains on bail release in the care of his parents until 5 December this year, under the supervision of this department. At all times, this department's dealings with the family have been frank and open and the allegations have been treated seriously. All possible steps have been taken to ensure the safety of the detainee and other detainees.

From the outline of the actions taken by officers of the Department of Correctional Services and the investigations currently under way by police, it could be said that the operations of Malak House are being conducted in a very professional way. I hope that the information provided satisfies the inquiries made by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Arnhem.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about an issue that has been much debated in the past but which has lain dormant for some years. Prior to the establishment of the Trade Development Zone, much of the debate in relation to the zone centred around the establishment in or near Darwin of a duty free port. Many civic leaders took up the issue. Persons such as Dr Stack, Lutz Frankenfeld and the venerable Tiger Brennan were involved in the debate. I have long been of the opinion that the establishment of a duty free shopping precinct in or near to Darwin is an achievable objective. I have spoken to businessmen with sufficient capital, tourist operators and any number of people in Darwin, and the general opinion is that such a duty free shopping precinct would be commercially viable and the drive towards the establishment of one should be supported.

The greatest problem facing the establishment of such a precinct would be constitutional issues or issues relating to the federal government. Given the situation of Norfolk Island which, constitutionally, is not much different

from that of the Northern Territory, I can see no reason why we cannot move towards the establishment of a duty free shopping precinct. The precinct that I envisage would be a resort-type facility located near to Darwin with easy access yet not easily accessible. We would need to control entry and departure of people from such a precinct so that what goods they were able to bring in from such a precinct would not be at variance with the rights and entitlements existing to bring goods from other areas such as Singapore or Hong Kong.

We would require regular RPT services of a high standard to service such a precinct. That in itself would have benefits for the Northern Territory. We would require a substantial area of land with coastal and beach areas and with a healthy area of hinterland on which to establish not only facilities such as the resort area itself and golf courses etc, but also a water supply, sewage treatment plants and rubbish dumps.

I believe that an ideal location for such a precinct would be on Melville Island. It is almost 6000 km<sup>2</sup>. It is easily accessed from Darwin, yet not easily accessible. The establishment of such a precinct would present unprecedented opportunities for the Tiwi people to ensure their own economic future. Offers of equity and employment for the Tiwi people could provide unprecedented opportunities for them to underpin their economic future. Melville Island has the physical resources required to support such a project, albeit at some expense. I am advised that sufficient amounts of ground water are available although at some distance from where one would see a precinct of this nature being established. That is a matter of costs and such costs have to be built into any development.

Obviously, there would be an impact on the tourist industry and that impact could be beneficial. With the problems that Australia faces with its current deficit, any little thing to help offset that deficit could be of enormous value. A duty free shopping precinct in this part of Australia could allow our domestic tourist industry to offer competition to destinations such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Bali or even Kupang by attracting people looking, not only for a rest and a holiday, but for cheap shopping. It is time that we addressed issues such as duty free shopping and examined why we allow so much of our tourist industry to be exported overseas when opportunities are available for us to keep that money in Australia and bolster the domestic tourist industry.

A resort of this nature, reliant as it would be on high-standard RPT services, would complement developments such as Kakadu and Litchfield National Park. Those RPT services could be extended into both parks. Batchelor has a well-established airstrip already which would require little upgrading and Jabiru's airstrip could be upgraded very easily. There is no reason why RPT services, operating day trips from our resort to Kakadu, would not be well supported. There is no reason why such a resort, offering the enticements of cheaper alcohol and cheaper clothes, would not lure a substantial part of the Darwin holiday market as well, in preference to Bali or Kupang.

There would be an impact on local retailers. It is probable that, initially, that impact would be deleterious. On the other side of the balance sheet, there would be opportunities for local traders not only to establish themselves in such a duty free shopping precinct, but also to become involved by way of sales at the point of departure. The amount of business that would be generated by people coming through Darwin to avail themselves of a duty free shopping precinct no doubt would add to the retail market in Darwin. I



think that would largely offset any downside that the establishment of such a precinct would have.

I believe that the establishment of a duty free precinct is an achievable objective. A great deal of work has to be done on it but, until the issue is raised again for debate in the community, I am afraid that work will not commence. It will require a well-considered and well-documented submission to the Commonwealth government in relation to its legality and any dispensations it would require. If it were to be located on Melville Island, obviously the proponents of such a scheme would have to work very closely with the Tiwi Land Council. I do not believe the proposal could even get off the ground unless it were supported by the Tiwi Land Council as a full participant in the scheme.

Most of the previous proposals for a duty free shopping precinct in or around Darwin had the precinct centred in Darwin. I believe that probably would not be acceptable to the federal government or to any other government in Australia in that the residents of an existing urban centre would be living with a considerable cost advantage over their cousins or brothers in other places. However, the establishment of a precinct in an area which is currently unoccupied, to which access can be readily and easily controlled and in which persons arriving could be subject to the usual customs checks, can be supported by convincing arguments.

I hope that the issue will not rest. Certainly, I will be talking around town and trying to beat it up as an issue again. It is an achievable objective, but certainly not one that will be achieved easily. It will not be achieved without the full support of the community, of all the members of this House and of all the representatives of the Northern Territory in other places.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there are 2 issues that I want to raise in this evening's adjournment debate. The first relates to the position of the Alcohol Counsellor at the Alice Springs Hospital. The Assembly has taken particular interest during these sittings and the previous sittings in the problems associated with the use and abuse of alcohol in the Northern Territory. My attention has been drawn to the slashing of the position of Alcohol Counsellor at the Alice Springs Hospital. I do not propose to dwell on the whole range of services that are and should be available to people in this regard in the Territory. However, I seek the views of the Minister for Health and Community Services. I trust that he will make a full statement with respect to that situation at Alice Springs Hospital.

The other issue that I want to raise in this evening's adjournment debate relates to external studies, in particular the impact of external studies on the training of child care workers in remote areas. I will commence by saying a couple of general things about external studies, and I want to draw this to the attention of the Minister for Education because it seems to me that it is more difficult to enrol in an external studies course in the Northern Territory in 1989 than it was 15 years ago. My recollection is that, when first I came to work here, many people were doing external courses, many of them through the University of Queensland. One chap, with whom I used to play cricket in Alice Springs, completed a law degree externally through the University of Queensland. However, it now appears that courses of that kind are very much more difficult to enrol for. My attention has been drawn to this, not particularly with respect to law courses, but with respect to a variety of tertiary courses of different kinds.

I would appreciate a full explanation of the availability, and the changes in availability of these courses. I recall that at one stage I was castigated by the member for Sadadeen because I was studying as well as being a member of the Legislative Assembly. I was in no way embarrassed or ashamed of the fact that I was studying. In fact, honourable members may be interested to know that, at about this time last month, in absentia, I graduated Master of Arts in Linguistics from the Australian National University.

A member: Congratulations!

Mr BELL: I recommend external studies and people acquiring new skills and developing their understanding in various disciplines throughout their working life. I believe that, particularly in a day and age where our work force is being required to readjust in the way that it is, it is important that we as an Assembly, and as individual members as well, take on those sort of issues. It is certainly very popular in the federal parliament. You will be aware, Mr Speaker, that our Governor-General, Hon Bill Hayden, in fact studied for an economics degree while he was a member of the House of Representatives, and I understand that the federal Minister for Education is enrolled in a law course at Macquarie University. Thus, those educational processes should not be beneath the dignity even of members of parliament.

However, that is not the reason that I raise the issue this evening. The reason I raise the issue this evening is because I have received representations from my constituents who work in the child care centre at Yulara. They have been advised that they must become qualified because they will be required by the Children's Services Bureau to hold some form of child care qualification. They are wholeheartedly in agreement with the requirement to improve their qualifications in this regard, and to improve their ability to care for children who are placed in their care. However, the problem is that it is impossible for child care workers who do not live in Darwin or Alice Springs to study and to receive those qualifications that are needed. No courses are offered externally at present, and that is a problem for these people. They are seeking to abide by the wish of the Children's Services Bureau, but they are unable to do so.

I am unaware of the negotiations in respect of the external mode for studying child care, but I understand that that is under active consideration by an arm or arms of the government and I hope that that will be given sympathetic attention. It will certainly assist those child care workers in different places to obtain the qualifications that they require. As I say, those courses are available in Darwin and Alice Springs but, obviously, there are child care centres and child care workers in many other places, such as Tennant Creek, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Groote Eylandt as well as Yulara, and I hope that, by drawing that issue to the attention of the government, some resolution may be possible. I will look forward to some explanation of those difficulties from either the Minister for Education or the Minister for Health and Community Services or both at some stage during these sittings.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to speak again on the matter of the barramundi fishery and the dispute that continues and is certainly gaining some momentum between commercial fishermen, who are going out of the fishery, and the government which is finding some difficulty with letting them go out in an appropriate way.

During his adjournment debate comments the other night, the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries referred to myself in these terms: 'You would never know where he stood on the fishery. He says this and he says that and,

at the beginning of the year, he changed his mind because he thought there was some votes in supporting the commercial fishermen, and then he changed his mind because he thought the recreational fishermen were getting offside. Tonight, for the benefit of the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, I would like to read into Hansard the position that I have taken consistently during the last 12 months on the barramundi fishery. If he can demonstrate to me any inconsistency in it, I would be more than happy to hear from him. On 15 January this year, the following article was published in the Sunday Territorian. I will just read it as it is written and include it in Hansard:

The unstated government policy of driving the commercial barra fishermen out of the Territory is sinking through to even the most ardent barra men. There is no doubt the government is committed to removing these men from the Northern Territory. The subtle methods of forcing bankruptcy on them and then offering them a buy-out figure for their nets is hardly the most dignified way of achieving the CLP's objective.

Mr Cam Runge stated in his report on our barra fishery that in 1986 the amateur fishermen took 58% of the barra catch. Since that time, the commercial fishermen have lost access to the Mary River, the East Alligator, the West Alligator and South Alligator Rivers, and the Wildman River. In addition to that, 7 barra licences have been bought out under the buy-back scheme. The government now proposes to close off the Daly River, not reopen the Mary River, close off Chambers Bay and spend about \$2m on buying licences.

The reality is that with 20 licensed fishermen trying to make a living out of the few rivers that are left open - and remember all the rivers on Aboriginal land are closed to fishermen - they must go broke. If the government is sincere about maintaining a commercial fishery it should move the closure line on the Daly River to the southern side of Palmerston Island. This would leave the amateurs with the barra and the commercial fishermen could get a quid out of the salmon. The government should also leave Chambers Bay open as this is a good salmon fishery.

It should also give the remaining 20 fishermen in the industry a guarantee the remaining fishing areas will not be diminished and that restrictions will not be placed on them that will reduce their productivity. If the government is not prepared to do this it should be fair to the fishermen, tell them honestly they want them out of the industry, and set up a judicial tribunal to award compensation to the fishermen who wish to leave the industry.

It is no longer adequate or appropriate to be throwing fishermen who are slowly going broke as a result of changing government policy, a few dollars per metre for their net. This is grossly unfair.

Mr Speaker, as I said, that article was written in January of this year and, in reply, I sent this letter to the editor on 1 February:

In responding to the letter from Dick Eussen of Jabiru (Sunday Territory 29 January) wherein he calls upon me to back the government in its proposal to remove commercial fishermen from the barra fishery, I think it is important that I explain my view on this matter because it would appear that Mr Eussen and others do not understand my attitude.

The balance between the commercial and amateur fishermen will always be a difficult one to strike. Barra will always be available in rivers and, at times when amateurs are not able to fish them, it is reasonable that professional fishermen have an opportunity to harvest this resource, if it does not reduce the stocks in the fishery. Amateur fishermen have access to areas that are not available to commercial fishermen, and it is fair and reasonable that that be the case.

My position is very simple. If the government has taken a conscious decision to remove the commercial fishermen from the barra fishery and make it available exclusively to amateur fishermen, that is fine. What should flow from that decision is a statement from the government outlining its intention and a schedule involving suitable compensation for those who will lose their livelihood. The government has not done that. It has embarked on a platform of stealth which is designed to starve the barra men out of the fishery over a period of time so the government can save a few dollars and avoid some political flak. It is just not acceptable for Territory fishermen to be deliberately driven into bankruptcy in the way the government is going.

What I have suggested to the government is that they establish a judicial board of review to assess the financial situation of every fisherman and make a determination about the level of compensation he should get to go out of the fishery. This review should take into account the number of units per metre of net held by the fisherman, the amount of effort he puts into his annual catch, the profitability of his annual catch, other interests and assets he has that are of value to his profession, how many dependants are relying on him, and how the capacity of the fisherman to find alternative work if he goes out of the fishery is likely to be affected.

I think most people would agree this is not an unreasonable proposition. I do not believe it is acceptable to be offering the fisherman so many dollars per metre of net and then a special loading based on his last 3 years performance as compensation. If we are going to remove the commercial fishermen from the fishery, let us do it with some integrity and with some dignity.

That letter, outlining my position quite clearly, was written as far back as February of this year. During the last few months, I have become embroiled in the barra dispute again because I believe that the treatment being meted out to barra fishermen is totally unreasonable. A perfectly acceptable solution could be reached if the government were to set up a tribunal such as that which I outlined in that correspondence, which is nearly a year old. It would provide an opportunity for barra fishermen to leave the industry with some dignity.

I indicate to the minister that I have now received a letter from a member of the Barramundi Fishermen's Association who believes that, in addition to the other techniques that are being used, he is being harassed by the police in an effort to get him out of the industry. I have forwarded that complaint to the Police Commissioner for investigation because, on the surface, it appears that some pretty unusual techniques are being used to encourage people to leave the industry.

There is no need for this unbelievable dispute which involves the lives and the futures of so many people. Barramundi fishermen, who have been in the industry for up to 20 years, remain in the system. Whatever we may think of the situation, they have been involved in that industry, which has provided the basis of their lifestyle and their commitment to the Territory. Under those circumstances, it is perfectly reasonable that they should receive a much better level of commitment from the government.

In his comments the other night, the minister said that he thought the scheme was the most generous in Australia and that the Commonwealth government had complimented him on it. The Commonwealth government would compliment anybody about anything, particularly if its bureaucracy perceived some advantage to itself in doing so. That is not important. What is important is that Territorians are satisfied that the buy-back scheme is working well. It is quite obvious from the continuing disputes that the buy-back scheme is far from being satisfactory. It looks as though it will be quite an issue in the days ahead. I would say to the minister again tonight that he should set aside any preconceived ideas about what is the best way to compensate the barramundi fishermen and perhaps set up discussions between himself and others with the industry to review the compensation techniques and methods. There is still a lot of aggro in the industry, and I do not believe that the barramundi fishermen will take their present treatment lying down. The last thing we need is another industry in the Northern Territory which is able to claim to have been given a hard time and driven broke by the government.

On a more parochial note, I would like to say that I had the opportunity 3 weeks ago to visit the Ali Curung School. I have been visiting Ali Curung since 1956. During that time, I have seen the community go through all sorts of peaks and troughs. However, I have to place on record tonight that I saw improvements at the Ali Curung School the likes of which I have never seen in any other Aboriginal school in the Northern Territory. It is an absolute credit to the departmental officers involved but, more importantly, to the people themselves. I will describe briefly what I saw.

When I arrived at the school, I was asked whether I would like to have a look around. I said that I would like to do that. The headmaster then said that there were only about 2 or 3 white teachers left at the school and that it was almost completely Aboriginalised in terms of teaching. We were taken to the senior girls' classroom where the girls were washing the outside wall with mops and so forth. It turned out that the girls had tendered for the school cleaning contract and were given \$19 a week to keep their part of the school clean. They used that money as a fund to pay for their extracurricular activities such as excursions etc. The inside of the classroom was so clean that you could have eaten a meal off the floor. It was absolutely immaculate. The display of students' work was outstanding. That is the only way to describe it.

In the context of the highs and lows of the Ali Curung community over the years, what is happening there is really an inspiration to every Aboriginal school in the Northern Territory. If the minister has the time and the interest to do so, I suggest that he have a video made of what is occurring at Ali Curung so that it can be circulated to other schools to give them an idea of the progress that is being made. In one instance, the Aboriginal people wanted a location for their language centre activities. No rooms or buildings were available and, therefore, they refurbished a demountable building which was adjacent to the school and had been wrecked by vandals. They scrounged materials from around the place and created a language centre to suit their own needs. Mr Speaker, it is really something. It is a credit to the people.

The only point that I would raise with the minister is that the school is now nearly 20 years old. It needs some funding for basic maintenance. The doors have rotted and no longer close properly. They have holes in them and there is need for flywire and basic repairs. If the minister could find a few dollars to help with the general maintenance of the school and if the effects of that were added to the work which students and members of the local community have put in, I am sure that the school would go from strength to strength.

It is important that I place on record my congratulations to the people of Ali Curung, the students at the school, the officers of the Department of Education who have obviously been very supportive in enabling these things to happen, and the minister himself. I do not doubt that, at some stage, he has made a contribution towards getting the school back on the rails. It is an example to the whole community.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, not very long ago, I wrote to the office of the Minister of Agriculture in Western Australia because I had read an article in a rural newspaper about a rural innovation centre in Western Australia. I made contact initially by telephone and subsequently I wrote a letter. In response, I have received quite extensive information. I do not know whether the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries or the Minister for Industries and Development know about this rural innovation centre, but it would do them and their departments good to examine its aims and objects. Briefly, I understand that it works in 2 ways. It goes out to the people with ideas about developing rural enterprises and it is also very receptive of ideas from the public. The public comes to the centre to develop rural ideas and innovative ideas.

The idea began in Esperance when local people commenced a project which related to innovative ideas. The Esperance project was so successful that its method of operation was incorporated into the purpose of the rural innovation centre. I was told of an example in which several graziers with fox problems on their properties came to the centre. They said: 'What can we do about it? Can we capitalise on the situation? Our efforts to get rid of foxes are costing far too much'. The centre is not generously bankrolled by the government and, as a result, the farmers had to put up money which was used by the rural innovation centre to investigate the establishment of a fox breeding project on the 5 properties. This project turned out to be very successful. It involved people putting their money where their mouths were and utilising an innovative approach suggested by this rural innovation centre which is part of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Originally, the rural innovation centre had an advisory board consisting of industry, agricultural and commercial representatives. That was not as successful as had been hoped and, rather than continue to operate with deadwood in the organisation, a recommendation was put to the minister that the advisory board be dissolved and replaced by a management committee under a rural chairman, answerable to the minister. This has proved to be very successful.

As well as the rural innovation scheme in Western Australia, a federal scheme is also in place. Various issues have been studied in this scheme and I believe a number of them could be of use to the Northern Territory. A grant has been given to the Victorian interests to develop and export the marketing of mango concentrates, which I find interesting. We could grow the mangoes whilst the value could be added down in Victoria. Another initiative was an investigation of overseas horticultural marketing education trends, instigated by New South Wales interests.

All of the initiatives which I will mention could be investigated by the relevant people here. New South Wales interests initiated the development of overseas markets for goat meat. Queensland interests put forward the development of commercialisation of processed pawpaw products for export. Information on such projects could be used here. The Department of Agriculture in South Australia put forward a development project involving export of shrink-wrapped rockmelons. In New South Wales, a grant was given for export market development for Australian-processed custard apple products. All of these activities could occur in the Northern Territory.

In Queensland, grants were given for the development of the mango processing industry and the export of mangoes under a controlled atmosphere. One notable initiative relates to the Northern Territory, and I believe that the initiative of the company involved has to be commented on. A grant was approved for the development of an efficient egg incubator for the Australian crocodile industry. The grant was made to G. Webb Pty Ltd, Winnellie, Northern Territory. Of course, all honourable members know Dr Graham Webb. As far as I am aware, however, that is the only grant which has been made to the Territory project. A grant was provided in Queensland for the extension of tomato exports using new technology. In South Australia, a grant was provided for the aseptic packing of fruit pastes and particulates into bulk bags. We have a developing horticultural industry and all of these processes have to be looked at from the point of view of our export industry. A grant was given to New South Wales interests for productivity improvement in prawn aquaculture. Such industries have particular relevance to the Northern Territory. We have people with the initiative not only to start new projects but to continue them. We do not have to go back very far in history to see that they are prepared to put their money where their mouths are.

I believe that the future of the Northern Territory does not lie only with the development of our ordinary agricultural product. We have an enormous field open to us in the innovative ways in which we can use our agricultural products. Australia has been existing for a long time on the export of basic primary products. We have to consider ways of earning more export income and earning more income for the Northern Territory as well as creating more jobs and furthering the development of the Northern Territory by adding value to our primary products before they are exported from the Northern Territory. I believe that one of the main ways in which we can do this is by looking at innovative ways of marketing our agricultural produce.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like first to add my commendation to Ali Curung School and the fantastic work that is being done there. I would like particularly to pay tribute to the community members. They have become very closely involved with the RATE teachers who volunteered for the program. There was an incredible number of applicants who wished to become involved as RATE teachers and to work alongside those who have been working there for many years.

The principal, Rob Haslett, and Kim Bridgewater were instrumental in putting together the initial concepts of how the whole school could be Aboriginalised over a short time, and this was put to a community meeting where it was supported enthusiastically. People gave it their total commitment. There were some initial problems in the bureaucracy, if you like, but I would like to say that, after I wrote to him, the honourable minister got behind the program and we were able to get it on the road. It is paying dividends already and the commitment of the teachers, students and community members is something to be marvelled at. An excellent job is being done in an excellent community.

The member for Barkly talked about Ali Curung having its ups and downs over a period, and certainly it is a fact of life that many communities around the Northern Territory, and not only Aboriginal communities, do have their ups and their downs. One community in my electorate has been going through an incredible downturn over quite a substantial period. This is in contrast to Ali Curung, and I spoke the other day of Nyirripi which is also going ahead in leaps and bounds. However, Yuendumu has major problems. It is always difficult to put your finger on these. The causes of them can be seen. In a couple of instances, I would possibly point the finger at 1 non-Aboriginal person who left and, hopefully, will return, and 1 non-Aboriginal person who did not leave early enough and, hopefully, will not return. The community ended up being divided. The arguments that occurred split families. The council was almost in a state of collapse and the other associated organisations such as the outstation council, the school and the store, all wore the flow-on from the general collapse in the community. For some time now, I have been working with community members there trying to assist them where possible in attempts to solve those problems.

At this stage, it looks as though a meeting which has been on and off for a fair while will occur late next week. The community is asking that the various departments that are involved there send out somebody to a meeting who has some authority so that the community can talk through their problems, acknowledge where they are at fault but also where, at various stages, government departments have been at fault and where government departments have done that incredible flick pass, selling a dumper to some other department when things became a little rough. The belief is - and I agree - that, if they can get senior people to sit down and talk through the difficulties and if there is an honest approach between such people and departmental representatives, there may be some possibility of coming to grips with the problems and overcoming them. The new council at Yuendumu has some people on it who are livewires and who should be able to get things moving. However, they need some support.

Apropos of remarks that the Chief Minister made when he visited Yuendumu, I would like to pass on a proposal that was put by Mr Harry Nelson when I was there the other day. He was talking about the difficulties that they were experiencing, and we were discussing the fact that the community probably has more rubbish around it than at any time that I can remember. He made the proposal that, if we could get funding for about 20 women to work with him for 3 months - and it would take that long; it is quite incredible - and if we were able to obtain some tipper trailers, they would be able to take the whole mess over to the dump in one concerted effort. That would be highly visual in its impact and it would be quite a significant move both on the community's part and on the part of other people in giving them some backup to have the place cleaned up and start the whole process of regeneration.

It is not enough to say that the community can do it from within its own resources. They have 1 truck which is tied up entirely with moving material from from houses etc, and it cannot handle the backlog. I believe that, even on a loan basis, if the community were lent 3 or 4 tipper trailers and we were to provide the funding for 20 women for 3 months and put Harry Nelson on as the overseer to ensure that the job was done, they would be able to move through the whole community in that period and take the rubbish away to the dump. A tractor would not be needed for each of the trailers. One tractor moving in rotation around them would be able to ensure that they were moved and relocated so that various groups could work across a broad front and make their way through the community. Of course, with the type of winds experienced there, they would need to ensure that they were working with the



wind because wind-driven rubbish becomes everybody's rubbish. It is no longer an individual's responsibility once it has blown across a couple of roads.

This could be done quite cheaply. It would indicate to the community that the government acknowledges that there is a problem and that the community wants to take action to sort it out. As I say, the removal of all that rubbish will have a very high visual impact and it will be a clear sign to the community that they are finally starting to take on these problems and get on top of them. If we wanted to go a bit further than that, another possibility would be to obtain the loan of a dozen or so of Hannons' waste disposal bins for people to put rubbish into. Those could then be put on the back of a trailer and moved out in that way. If litter is placed on the back of a trailer and there are high winds, there is always a risk that the rubbish will be redistributed by the wind from the trailer or whatever is being used to move it to the dump.

Mr Speaker, that was one issue that I wanted to raise. The other relates to touch football in Alice Springs. Touch football in Alice Springs has grown by leaps and bounds, and that has not been simply concurrent with my taking up the sport. I think that other factors are involved. However, even though it is the summer competition, there are now 12 mixed teams playing there. That involves 84 players on the field and, given the number of substitutes used, 150 players in the competition. That is more than double the number who were playing a year ago. Of course, there is also a very strong men's competition and a smaller women's competition. A very substantial number of people are involved in the sport in Alice Springs. In fact, I scored my first try last weekend. It has taken me 2 seasons to do that, and I want to ensure that that is on the Hansard record.

It is very difficult playing in Alice Springs in the middle of summer and I recall that, in Darwin, the government provided the materials and the expertise and the Touch Association provided the labour to install the excellent set of lights at the racecourse. Now that the incumbent of the portfolio of youth, sport, recreation and ethnic affairs has been relocated south of the Berrimah Line, I hope that the honourable minister will take on board the proposition that we should have a floodlit field in Alice Springs. I am told that there is a very real need for that, and not only for touch football. There is a very real possibility that we could double up with Rugby Union, which plays right through the summer, and Rugby League which wants to come into at least the edges of the season.

If we were to install adequate lighting on the Anzac Oval, using movable posts that could be lifted out when touch was playing and reinserted when Union or League were playing, we would have enough space to cater adequately for the 3 sports to be played at night. I am told that there is an old set of lights at the Verdi Club which it purchased some years ago. It may be possible for the government to do a deal with the club. I believe it would be quite happy to do a deal in relation to something which is in excess of its requirements. If those lights could be purchased and the government could provide some technical support and other materials, I am sure that volunteers from the 3 codes would be prepared to do the work. The oval could then be used a couple of nights of the week for touch football and for League and Union on other nights. In fact, Union may even take up a couple of nights over the week. We would find that the oval would be very highly utilised. It is very popular. It is one of those activities where family members come along to watch the games. People from the early games watch the later games. It is a very social sport. It has a high participation rate among people, and not only among the teenagers and 20-year-olds. Even the ancients like myself

become involved. It is something which the honourable minister should take on board. I know the proposal has been around for a long time. After discussions between various groups, the feeling is that the groups could get together and utilise the ground effectively. It would be a real boon to Alice Springs.

The baseball area at Alice Springs is floodlit. A previous honourable minister was an aficionado of that sport and it was able to score. I do know that the present honourable minister is more of an Australian Rules or aerial ping-pong player. I hope that he will realise that Rugby is the greatest game of all and that it can develop as a night sport in Alice Springs during the summer period.

Mr VALE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I will be very brief. I will advise the member for Stuart and all members from central Australia that the proposal for lighting the ovals at both Traeger Park and Anzac Hill is being costed. The member might not realise that Rugby Union is presently being played on the oval at the eastern end of the Verdi Club. I was not aware that those lights were still there, but I will look into that and keep honourable members posted.

The other point that I would make is that neither of the ovals at Anzac Hill and Traeger Park could support Rugby Union or Rugby League for 12 months of the year. They have to be spelled. The other possibility is to shake a significant contribution out of the Alice Springs Town Council. Both of those sporting ovals are council property. I will keep the honourable member and others posted.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, this morning in response to a question regarding Christmas party tax, the Chief Minister expressed his concern about the way that small business has been labouring - pardon the pun - under the imposition of a whole range of taxes that have been imposed on this country since the Hawke Labor government came to power in 1983. It is very important to reiterate one of the points that was made in the advertisement. It says: 'Of all the new taxes imposed on this small business and its proprietors, and there have been many, an increase of 48.2% to 1988 since Labor came to power, none galls me more than Labor's Christmas party tax'. It refers, of course, to the fringe benefits tax. I would like to quote from an editorial that appeared in the NT News. I do not have the exact date but I know it was in 1986. The headline is 'Genuine Anger'. It reads:

Darwin businessmen and others who met yesterday to express their concern over, and opposition to, the fringe benefits tax were misguided or politically motivated, according to Labor's Senator Ted Robertson. The incredible Senator Robertson has done it again. Safe in his Canberra job and the security of a public pension most Australians can never expect to get, he dares criticise a group of small businessmen who are facing one of the most punitive and unfair taxes in the history of this country - indeed a tax that will force many to the wall.

I will not quote the whole text, but the closing sentence says:

How much longer will Australians tolerate the likes of Senator Robertson before they say: 'Enough'?

His own party did not tolerate him for much longer because, at the next election, Senator Robertson lost his endorsement and was replaced by Senator Bob Collins.

The reality is that the federal Labor government has mortgaged Australia's future. Since 1983, Labor has saddled Australia with the highest interest rates that we have ever experienced in this country, a massive foreign debt, record current account deficits, an internationally uncompetitive wages policy, stubbornly high inflation, falling living standards, stop-go economic growth and abysmal productivity levels.

Let us have a look at a few of the new taxes. Mr Speaker, I will remind you that, since 1983, we have had the imposition of a fringe benefits tax, a capital gains tax and an entertainment tax, the initial removal of the negative gearing provisions until investment in home building went through the floor, the original foreign tax-credit system, which has since been modified, the original lump-sum superannuation tax, which has since been removed partially, increased company tax, which was reduced quite recently, new wholesale sales taxes, increased petrol excise from 6¢ to about 24¢ per litre, automatic biannual indexation on produce excise rates, a wine tax, excise tax on intermediate and new oil exploration, a tax on superannuation fund income, a graduate tax and, in the coming year, we will see a gold tax. All those taxes add up to the 48.2% cumulative tax.

It is very important that, under a Labor federal government, we have seen our international debt increase markedly. In June 1983, when the Fraser conservative government lost power, the foreign debt stood at something like \$35 000m. I do not have the exact figure, but it is currently in the vicinity of \$140 000m.

Mr Speaker, let us have a look at some of the things which have been said. We have all heard of Hawkespeak. It is a fairly common term these days. This is what the Prime Minister said on the ABC PM program on 11 December 1984:

Let me make it clear that this is not a country which needs an increase in the tax burden and, under my government, it is not going to get it. It is also a country which does not need an increase in interest rates and it is not going to get it. And that means that it is appropriate that we reduce the deficit.

However, Mr Speaker, in The Sun Pictorial of 1 May 1985, Senator Cook said: 'The Labor Party is a high-taxing party. It needs to be to carry out its reforms'. There was immediate conflict between the words of the Prime Minister and Labor Senator Cook.

Mr Speaker, I want to return to what I said a moment ago in quoting the Prime Minister's reference to the tax burden and increased interest rates. It is quite significant. When he addressed a business luncheon in Adelaide on 20 November 1984, Mr Hawke said:

At present, the outlook for interest rates is as bright as it has been for more than a decade. Australia and Australians will, in 1985, reap the interest rate rewards that are flying from the successful policies of the past 20 months. We have ploughed the field and sown the seeds and, in the very near future, we will harvest the crop.

I suggest that, since then, there has been a drought. The crop is withering on the vine.

In the House of Representatives on 19 March 1986, Mr Hawke said: 'The government remains committed to the retention of the 13.5% ceiling on housing

interest rates'. Today, those rates have risen to 18% or very close to it. That is another broken promise which shows that Hawkespeak really does not count for very much.

Mr Vale: No kids in poverty in the 1990s.

Mr SETTER: That is right, Mr Speaker.

The Hawke Labor government is the highest taxing government in Australia's history. Government tax revenues have been increased massively since Labor first came to office. They have risen from \$41 000m in 1982-83 to an estimated \$82 000m in 1988-89. Who pays, Mr Speaker? The man in the street pays - you and I and all these other people.

Mr Vale: Your average friendly policeman ...

Mr SETTER: Yes, Mr Speaker, even police officers pay. Total tax revenue in 1988-89 is now estimated to be nearly 26% of the gross domestic product. The federal government is taxing us into oblivion.

Let us have a look at what Mr Hawke said in a policy launch on 16 February 1983: 'Labor will reduce the price of petrol by in the order of 3¢ a litre'. Petrol went up 300% in the following 3 years. Would you believe that? In a press statement on 30 October 1979, the then shadow minister for mines and energy said, and I quote: 'Mr Fraser has virtually established a branch of the Australian Taxation Office at every petrol pump'. That is what he had the audacity to say. Yet today, the same Mr Keating, as the Treasurer of this country, is extracting about 24¢ per litre from the citizens of this country. About 4¢ of that is being returned by way of road funding. Is that Hawkespeak? Is that Keatingspeak? Yes, Mr Speaker. In February 1983, they promised a reduction of 3¢ a litre. What have they done? They have increased it by up to 24¢ a litre!

'Labor has pledged not to impose a sales tax or excise duty on wine', said Mr Hawke in a rural policy speech on 20 February 1983. In August 1984, a wine sales tax was imposed. Can you trust these people, Mr Speaker? Can you rely on what they tell us? Again, in a rural policy speech delivered on 20 February, Mr Hawke said: 'Labor has pledged not to impose a sales tax on the excise of wine'.

At a press conference on 15 April 1983, Mr Hawke said: 'There has been no basis for the speculation that lump sum superannuation tax payments would be increased'. Lump sum super tax increased in May 1983, 1 month after the Prime Minister made that statement. Can you trust these people? No, Mr Speaker, not one bit, because they have broken their promises time after time. Mr Hawke said this at a press conference on 15 April 1983: 'There has been no basis for the speculation on an increase in the tax rate for lump sum superannuation'. We all know that superannuation, be it lump sum or otherwise, has been taxed quite heavily in the last several years.

Labor Health Minister Blewett said in the House of Representatives on 22 August 1984: 'Let me make it quite clear that the government has absolutely no intention of increasing the 1% Medicare levy. That is an absolute commitment by this government'. The Medicare levy was increased in August 1986. I repeat again, Mr Speaker, can you trust these people? No, you cannot trust them.

Of course, we look around now at what is happening with this federal Labor government and we see that it is in a shambles. It is casting from side to side, trying to solve the increasing problems that it has brought on this country. We have the current pilots' dispute that will have a horrendous effect on the economy of this country. Receipts for the federal Labor government will be down quite considerably, Mr Speaker, I can assure you of that. Quite recently, we saw a bail-out package announced for Union Carbide for a factory in Victoria.

A member: And Kodak.

Mr SETTER: Sorry, it was Kodak. I stand corrected, Mr Speaker.

Mr Reed: \$30m.

Mr SETTER: \$30m. I say to you, Mr Speaker, that the Hawke Labor government just cannot be trusted when it comes to economic matters.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITIONS

Proposed Subdivision of Lot 3262 Lagoon Road

Mr COULTER (Palmerston): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 37 citizens of the Northern Territory requesting the Assembly to disallow the subdivision proposed for Lot No 3262 Lagoon Road. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

The honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain citizens of the Northern Territory, electors of the division of Palmerston, respectfully showeth that we the undersigned object to the proposed subdivision of Lot No 3262 Lagoon Road for reasons including: (1) subdivision of the area into small properties will create an intolerable environmental burden on the adjacent Knuckey Lagoon ecosystem; (2) existing precedents set for the properties adjoining the lagoon region have called for properties of larger acreage than proposed. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the subdivision be not allowed to proceed and the petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Mary River Fishing Reserve Proposal

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 2356 citizens of the Northern Territory requesting the Assembly to declare the Mary River system a flora, fauna and recreational fishing reserve. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

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 showeth that the Mary River system, defined as the current Mary River barramundi management area, is vital to the quality of life enjoyed by all Territorians, and overdevelopment or exploitation will destroy the pristine environment. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly will guarantee citizens that major and damaging developments will not be allowed in the Mary River system, will take immediate action to declare the Mary River system a flora, fauna and recreational fishing reserve and will guarantee public access to Corroboree Billabong from the west.

MOTION

Notice - Tenancy Amendment Bill (Serial 242)

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that General Business Notice No 2 standing in my name for the presentation of the Tenancy Amendment Bill (Serial 242) be called on forthwith.

Mr Speaker, last week, I identified a problem with the tenancy legislation. The problem is quite simple and the solution to the problem is

quite simple. The problem is that some landlords have identified a way of demanding a goodwill payment from tenants - a way of demanding, though not necessarily receiving, payments of up to \$150 000. Let us not forget that we are talking about small business people. They are the backbone of the Northern Territory: people who go into small business, often with limited capital, people who commit their livelihood to building up a business. Under the provisions of the Tenancy Act, these people have no protection against landlords who demand these so-called goodwill payments.

Last week, the honourable minister stated that he had no evidence of this practice. However, he said this morning that he had met with some affected tenants. We know that the Attorney-General was presented with information on this particular issue at a Country Liberal Party meeting last week. We know that those things have happened. From the minister's own words this morning, we know that there is a problem and that there have been demands placed by landlords on small business operators in the Northern Territory. There have been demands for goodwill payments of up to \$150 000 during negotiations concerning rent renewals.

That is an intolerable position. We were all left with the impression last week that the government intended to do something about the problem during these sittings. However, it has not addressed it at all. Instead, in question time this morning, we heard a mealy-mouthed response from the honourable minister indicating that nothing will be done and that he is seeking further advice. It is a simple problem and there is a simple solution which addresses the matter directly. It does not address the broader question of commercial tenancies in any way, although we agree with the honourable minister that that question needs to be addressed. However, in the meantime, there is a need to provide protection to the small business people of the Northern Territory who are facing the possibility of being ripped off.

That is why we moved to have the bill brought on last week. That is why the honourable minister gave a very clear impression to us last week that he would take action this week. We now find that nothing has happened and the government does not intend to take any action whatsoever. To put it bluntly, we have a situation in which small business people who are renting commercial premises will be at risk from landlords in this town during the next few months. They have always been at risk. There is no doubt about that. However, the situation now is that the degree of risk is significantly greater because all landlords know about the situation as a result of the publicity which it has received. Because of that publicity, everybody in the community knows that there is a loophole in the tenancy legislation that enables landlords to demand, quite legitimately and within the law, so-called goodwill payments up-front. That is what we are trying to stamp out. I would think that people in the community would consider that that is a reasonable proposition.

In the eyes of the commuter on the Clapham bus, to use a common legal term, that is a reasonable proposition. Once you have identified a problem as we have identified a problem, once you have identified a solution as we have identified a solution, and once you have identified a solution that does not impact on any broader area as we have identified a solution that does not impact on any broader area, in the interests of the public and in the interests of the small business people of the Northern Territory, it is appropriate that we address that problem today.

Without actually saying it, the Minister for Health and Community Services indicated quite clearly last week that he would do something. However, the

government is not prepared even to bring this matter on for debate. We have a situation. The government is so mealy-mouthed and so concerned about big business in the Northern Territory that it is not prepared to put up a simple proposition. If it does not have the wit to put up a simple proposition itself, it is not even prepared to support a simple proposition from the opposition to fix this problem.

The Tenancy Act is silent in this area. It does not cover the situation. A problem has been identified quite clearly by this side of the House. I will say it slowly for the slow learners on the government benches. Small business people in this community have committed their own money to building up a business. Let us not forget how hard the work is in supermarkets where the main problem has arisen so far. It is 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Those are the sort of people whom we are talking about. Through their own sweat, they are trying to build for themselves a secure future and, at the same time, to provide a service for the people of the Northern Territory.

Through our efforts in talking to people in the community, we have identified this problem. The problem is quite simple. When these hardworking people, who put in their 7-day weeks and 12-hour days for 365 days a year, improve the cash flows of their businesses, make their premises more attractive, improve their shopping centres by their very success and create profits for themselves, some landlords - and at this stage it is only a few - demand what they see to be their cut. That is not acceptable. The ordinary person on the Clapham bus would say that it is not acceptable for landlords to be able to demand an additional cut from somebody who has slaved away for 7 days a week, 12 hours a day to build up a business. Those discussions should occur in terms of rent renegotiation. However, for landlords to demand from tenants an extra payment for goodwill is not acceptable. This practice needs to be stamped out quickly.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15

Noes 8

Mr Collins  
 Mr Coulter  
 Mr Dondas  
 Mr Finch  
 Mr Firmin  
 Mr Harris  
 Mr Hatton  
 Mr McCarthy  
 Mr Manzie  
 Mr Palmer  
 Mr Perron  
 Mr Poole  
 Mr Reed  
 Mr Setter  
 Mr Vale

Mr Bailey  
 Mr Bell  
 Mr Ede  
 Mr Lanhupuy  
 Mr Leo  
 Mrs Padgham-Purich  
 Mr Smith  
 Mr Tipiloura

Motion agreed to.

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



Division called and bells rung.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for Nhulunbuy has left the Chamber. I hope he does not intend to return after the bells have been rung. He is not permitted to leave the Chamber.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The member for Nhulunbuy is not permitted to leave the Chamber.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 8

Noes 15

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Ede  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura

Mr Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

TABLED PAPER

On Balance - Towards a Conservation Strategy  
for the Northern Territory

Mr HATTON (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I lay on the Table a discussion paper entitled 'On Balance - Towards a Conservation Strategy for the Northern Territory' and I move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

Mr Speaker, in August this year, the Chief Minister announced that this government had begun preparation of a conservation strategy for the Northern Territory to complement the National Conservation Strategy that we had already endorsed. He said that the strategy would serve as an umbrella policy statement which would facilitate a planned approach to the conservation and utilisation of our natural resources.

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the procedures of this House. There was some controversy about my presence in this Chamber a while ago and I seek leave to move a motion that would allow me to refer that matter to the Privileges Committee. I think that the procedures of this House must take precedence over all other matters before the House and that is why I seek the leave of the House to move that motion.

Mr SPEAKER: It is not a matter of privilege but a matter of order. There is already a question before the Chair and we will deal with that question.

Mr LEO: I apologise, Mr Speaker. I thought that the matter before the Chair was a statement rather than a motion.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, as I was saying, the Chief Minister said that the strategy would focus on the integration of development and conservation, the concept of sustainable development and utilisation of resources, and preservation of the Territory's genetic diversity and essential ecological processes. He said that the strategy would provide guidelines and safeguards to ensure that the natural environment was properly considered and cared for by this and future governments, community organisations, companies and individual landowners and land users. It would provide guidelines for living and non-living resource development including tourism, recreation, mining, urban development, manufacturing processes, parks and wildlife and primary production. The Chief Minister made a commitment also to issue a discussion paper seeking community views on all aspects of the strategy before it was finalised.

Honourable members, the document I am tabling today, called 'On Balance - Towards a Conservation Strategy for the Northern Territory' is that discussion paper. It will be widely distributed and promoted within the Northern Territory, and it is my hope that it will attract many and varied comments from a broad cross-section of the community. It will form the basis of the government's conservation strategy but, at the moment, its content is simply a starting point. Public opinion will be used to focus its attention on particular areas and to develop priorities. It may even stimulate discussion groups and perhaps form the basis of school projects. Basically, this paper does not seek to offer answers, but proposes questions. It will be up to the community to help us resolve these important issues of conservation, which are an essential part of many decisions of government.

The level of community commitment to tackle seriously conservation issues will determine to a considerable extent the strategy that is eventually adopted by the government. Few people will disagree with the premise that governments need conservation strategies, but it is not clear to many people just what a strategy is expected to achieve. In the case of the Territory government, it is seen as an essential element of the planning process and a balance to development policy. Indeed, the world conservation strategy, which has inspired many of the principles underlying this discussion paper, draws attention to the fact that development and conservation must be considered as integral parts of a single process. This recognises that development will proceed, but that it must be managed carefully in line with sound conservation principles.

A conservation strategy, therefore, seeks to define the limits of responsible development and to ensure that our resources are conserved for future generations. Ways in which this could be done include limiting the impact of development on the environment, controlling the consumption of non-renewable resources, and encouraging an increase in the use of renewable resources. The need for a conservation strategy implies that a development policy is in place and, indeed, that is the case. Development is an essential activity and must continue as populations grow and living standards rise.

The Northern Territory could be said to be underdeveloped in the sense that there is considerable potential for growth, particularly in the mining, industrial and tourism sectors of the economy, and considering that there is plenty of room for population expansion. There is no suggestion that this development should not continue. Indeed, it is being strongly encouraged by this government and has the potential to improve the lifestyles and living

standards of all Territorians. But, if development is to continue, it must be done within the framework of sound conservation practices or eventually we will bankrupt our natural resources. In fact, the Territory government has long recognised this and has adopted conservation principles in its decision-making processes. The government has not always been given the recognition it has deserved for this, but the evidence is there. It exists in all areas of government activity and all that is lacking is a common policy upon which to hang the many conservation functions and practices now in use and to provide firm guidance for the future. This discussion paper should eventually provide that policy.

Conservation is something that, to be successful, must be conducted at all levels of society, from the global to the individual. The importance of a global approach to conservation is underlined by the implications of the Greenhouse Effect as far as climate change and global warming are concerned. This issue is complex enough to be addressed separately and, indeed, the Territory government has made the first moves towards developing a Greenhouse strategy but, for the present, suffice to say that the Greenhouse issue must be taken into account in any conservation strategy and may even emerge as the dominant consideration in conservation policy.

Thus the conservation strategy that will ultimately be adopted by the Territory government is expected to be in line with the World Conservation Strategy and will be a continuation of the National Conservation Strategy. It will cover all aspects of our environment considered to have conservation ramifications. The goals suggested in this discussion paper are: to maintain life support systems and the processes which keep them operating; to retain the full range of genetic material represented in Territory animals and plants; where renewable resources are used by Territorians for economic or recreational benefit, to ensure that their use is sustainable; to manage the use of non-renewable resources; and to preserve the Territory's cultural heritage.

The Conservation Commission is the government's primary vehicle for conservation action and a brief resume of some of its activities will show that this government places a high priority on conservation as an essential element of development and is adhering to the principles underlining these stated goals. During the past 11 years, over \$257m has been allocated to the Conservation Commission, increasing from just \$10.248m in 1978-79 to an allocation of \$35.303m plus \$16.387m for capital works this year. There is a dramatic increase in the amount of land now controlled by the commission. Currently, the commission manages over 4 220 500 ha of parks and reserves throughout the Territory, and this does not include the Commonwealth managed Kakadu and Uluru National Parks. The commission manages 7 national parks, some in conjunction with Aboriginal traditional owners, 1 marine park, 19 nature parks, 12 conservation reserves, 13 historical reserves and 34 other conservation areas. However, this should not suggest that the government is simply locking up land from productive use. Behind the acquisition of every parcel of land there are sound conservation principles.

The declaration of Watarrka National Park incorporating Kings Canyon in central Australia ensured that a broad sample of the ecosystems found in the area were conserved and that one vital part of the Territory's genetic diversity in plant and animal life was secured. The George Gill Range, which falls within the park area, is thought to be one of the most significant areas in Australia as far as botanical diversity is concerned. It contains several unusual plant communities associated with the sheltered gorges and high peaks of the ranges, such as the relic cycad *Macrozamia macdonnelli*. Over 570 plant

species have been recorded representing one-third of central Australian flora types. At least 45 of these species are classified as rare and 17 are relics from the ancient past.

The area contains many sites of significance to the Arrernte Aboriginal people. For thousands of years, it was and continues to be a focus of Aboriginal culture in central Australia. Evidence of past occupation can be seen in art sites and grinding places found throughout the area. There are also several sacred sites and important dreaming trails. In addition, there are many widely-scattered historical sites associated with early exploration and pastoral settlement, and these sites owe their existence in part to the permanent natural waters along the southern base of the George Gill Range. Community support for the concept of holding such land and features in public trust for conservation purposes is evidenced in this case by the fact that, in 1983, the lessees of Tempe Downs Station voluntarily surrendered 1059 km<sup>2</sup> to the Territory government for the purpose of a national park in the Kings Canyon region, which subsequently became the Watarrka National Park.

This park is also the venue of a unique project to reintroduce to its natural environment the bilby, an endangered species which has disappeared from most of its central Australian habitat. This is only one part of the Conservation Commission's extensive research work into the preservation of the genetic diversity of the Territory environment. The mala and bilby, both endangered species, are the subjects of current research and breeding programs. Little was known about the bilby's ecology or status before the commission initiated research. The first successful breeding colony in Australia was established in Alice Springs by the commission after animals were captured in 1979 with help from Yuendumu Aboriginal people.

This captive breeding colony continues to this day at the Arid Zone Research Institute in Alice Springs. This captive colony enabled investigation of the breeding biology and social behaviour of bilbies. The commission held trial reintroductions at Simpsons Gap National Park in 1982, which showed the potential to re-establish this species in a suitable habitat. With funding from the World Wildlife Fund, work began in 1983 on a national survey which mapped past and current distribution of the bilby and determined the factors affecting its abundance, distribution and key habitat attributes. After the establishment of the reintroduction program at Watarrka, a third generation of free-ranging bilbies has been produced. Results from the mala breeding program have been similarly successful.

Another notable program concerned with the preservation of animal species is research into the reasons for the observed decline in numbers of the Gouldian finch. Currently, only 2 major and 3 minor breeding populations of this finch are known to exist in the Territory. Billiton Gold Australia, which is proposing a mining operation adjacent to one of the identified sites, is cooperating with the government on trying to establish the status of the population and to develop conservation strategies. The World Wildlife Fund is providing funding for this project through Billiton Gold and the questions which must be answered go to the heart of the conservation/development nexus. If the mining operation is to go ahead, can it be done without damaging the Gouldian finches' nesting site? If the site were to be damaged by mining, would this have any significant effect on the overall status of the Gouldian finch in Australia? There is a delicate balance to be achieved here, and it is just possible that the question may be decided by the relative values to society of the Gouldian finch and of gold production.

This is a point which will be emerging with increasing frequency in the future. The community must realise that there is invariably a price to be paid for conservation. However, there is no reason to suppose that conservation and development must necessarily be incompatible. Some of the Conservation Commission's projects have shown that they can be complementary. For instance, the commission has developed a world recognised management program for the Territory's salt-water and freshwater crocodiles, and at the same time has fostered the growth of commercial crocodile farming.

With the introduction of protection for the salt-water crocodile in 1971, crocodile numbers have increased gradually from a dangerously low level to levels which are believed to be approaching those that existed prior to European settlement of the Territory. The commission has allowed, under strict guidelines, the supply of breeding stock for 3 Territory crocodile farms and has successfully petitioned to allow the setting up of an international trade in salt-water crocodile products from the Territory. This trade has increased to such an extent that now 2000 skins and 10 t of crocodile flesh are produced annually with 10 000 salt-water and 12 000 freshwater crocodiles held on Territory crocodile farms. At the same time, crocodile numbers have increased tenfold and poaching has become an almost impossible task because of strict controls on the commercial activity.

Another animal which has benefited from a Conservation Commission management program is the magpie goose. Once widespread throughout Australia, the species has been all but eliminated from the 7 states. Its last stronghold is the Territory's wetlands. Each year, during the wet season, a 50 000 km<sup>2</sup> area of the wetlands and surrounding woodlands is surveyed by commission staff to count the geese and their nests and other conspicuous wetland birds. These counts provide an estimate of the goose population and its distribution and have provided the basis for the setting of hunting season and bag limits, and for the establishment of guidelines for commercial magpie goose farming using, for a start-up, eggs collected from the wild and incubated. The capacity to identify trends and respond quickly to change is an essential element of a comprehensive management strategy design to ensure that the magpie goose remains one of the Territory's most abundant and conspicuous birds and a symbol of the Top End wetlands.

Forestry management is another area where the balance between utilisation and conservation of resources can be exercised for long-term community benefit. In 1986, the Territory government handed over the Melville Island plantations of *Pinus caribea* and cypress pine, along with support facilities, to the Tiwi people. Their company is continuing to develop the project on a commercial basis and, as well as providing future employment and cash flow opportunities for the Tiwi community, these forests will make a significant contribution to the supply of essential raw materials to Darwin. The Territory government will continue to support this important initiative with research and advisory services.

This year has seen approvals given for the selective harvesting of individual stems of lancewood and gutta percha from the extensive stands that stretch across the middle latitudes of the Territory. These densely grained timbers are highly desirable on the specialised European market for quality veneers and spinning shuttles. The company involved realises that its commercial future depends on sustaining long-term production and has willingly assisted in developing workable and strict environmental conditions designed to ensure the protection of habitat.

Good conservation management is also evident in the feral animal control measures undertaken by the commission. As a result of the Board of Inquiry into Feral Animals held in 1979, the Conservation Commission established a Feral Animals Advisory Committee to coordinate and recommend actions in regard to feral animal controls. The commission also developed a program of assessing populations and distributions of major feral animal species such as buffalo, donkeys and horses. With the assistance of the national BTEC program, buffalo populations have now been brought under control, providing an opportunity for the restoration and rehabilitation of some of our damaged coastal plains. Buffalo caused a huge amount of damage in coastal wetland areas and, in some places, notably at Murgarella and the Mary River flood plains, furthered salt-water intrusion leading to more land degradation.

Parts of the Mary River Conservation Reserve are suffering the effects of salt-water intrusion but a multiple land-use program being conducted jointly with local landowners will lead to improvement. This is another instance of the successful marriage of conservation and development and of community support for conservation projects. The landowners are helping to build barrages to prevent salt-water intrusion and a joint fencing project will allow controlled grazing for better land management. In return, the landowners will be given grazing rights under strict guidelines and will agree to abide by Conservation Commission advice to protect magpie goose breeding grounds on their properties adjoining the reserve.

In 1984, the Territory brought the Environmental Assessment Act into effect thus enabling the government to assess the environmental implications of development activities. In 1988-89, 24 preliminary environmental reports and 4 environmental impact statements were assessed by the commission, while numerous other proposals, which did not require formal attention at the PER or EIS level, were referred to the commission for assessment. Although the system has worked well to date, the government intends to review the assessment procedures with a view to improving implementation and providing for more public input.

The Conservation Commission has developed administrative arrangements with departments, for example the Departments of Mines and Energy and Transport and Works, to facilitate implementation of environmental impact assessment legislation, while an agreement on joint Territory Commonwealth environmental assessment arrangements has been negotiated for proposals in the Territory involving Commonwealth agencies.

The Northern Territory coastal management policy, adopted by Cabinet in 1985, provides another example of the relationship between conservation and development. The policy enables an integrated approach to conservation and development to ensure that management of the coastal zone optimises the social and economic benefits for present and future generations. The objectives of the coastal management policy include: the protection of the coast from physical and aesthetic deterioration through erosion, pollution and misuse; the maximisation of public access to coastal recreation opportunities; ensuring that major development proposals affecting the coastal zone are subject to environmental assessment; ensuring that any proposed significant change in the policy is reviewed by interested agencies and the public; and the identification and protection of areas of cultural and historical importance. Already, this policy has proved valuable with the preparation of a draft Darwin Harbour Mangrove Management Plan, which will ensure responsible development in the harbour and the maintenance of mangrove productivity at a high level, in order to maintain the health of the harbour and to sustain the development of harbour-related industries.

Land care has become a topical subject with the declaration by the Commonwealth of 1990 as the Year of Land Care and the subsequent period as the Decade of Land Care. However, the Territory government has been pursuing this issue for many years. In 1983, the introduction of the geographical information system, which recorded and collated all information regarding land systems including soil, vegetation, likelihood of erosion and other details, meant that, when conservation and recreation values were entered into the system, future uses for sections of land could be accurately assessed. Broad-scale regional surveys throughout the Territory have provided information on the capability of land to support pastoral, agricultural, cropping, recreational and urban uses, and areas which are degraded or are susceptible to degradation. The Conservation Commission has been instrumental in the formation of land care groups throughout the Territory, with 4 groups formed to date. These groups are comprised of concerned landowners who have banded together to determine methods of overcoming existing land degradation and of preventing further degradation. The commission provides advisory and support services to these groups.

There is more to conservation than the protection of the natural environment. Conservation involves the economical use of non-renewable resources and wider use of renewable resources. It also involves the protection of our heritage, culture and history, and the maintenance of our desired quality of life. Pollution control, the provision of open space in urban developments and the recycling of used materials are all part of conservation. The successful implementation of some of these depends strongly on community involvement. Recycling is one such activity which is becoming increasingly important. There is already strong community support for the principle of recycling but, in practice, there are some difficulties in the Territory related to the small size of the market and the cost of transporting recycled materials to southern processors. However, recycling programs are already in place. Government departments and statutory authorities are taking steps towards recycling their own materials and using recycled paper products where possible.

The government has decided to formulate a policy on recycling to apply to all areas of the government. It will coordinate the efforts now being made and, hopefully, will result in some economies of scale as far as the purchase of recycled paper products is concerned. Currently, about 10 000 m<sup>2</sup> of material is recycled annually in the NT, comprising paper, glass, aluminium cans, cooking and sump oils, iron, plastic and film processing materials. The possibility of expanding this is being investigated by the government but the main obstacle remains the difficulty of making such operations commercially attractive. One partial solution is a higher level of community involvement in recycling, and this is something which could be addressed by respondents to this discussion paper. For instance, would people be prepared to separate their household waste and transport some items to central collection points?

It is obvious that the Territory government, particularly through the Conservation Commission, has been well aware of environmental issues and of the need to conserve our flora, fauna and heritage for the future, while ensuring that the current generation can enjoy the greatest sustainable benefit. Throughout the world, governments have become pro-active in caring for the environment. This government endorsed the World Conservation Strategy which was launched in 1981, and the National Conservation Strategy for Australia and it has now come to the time when a more specific strategy must be introduced for the benefit of the Northern Territory.

The discussion paper presented today is designed to lead ultimately to a strategy to provide future direction for the management of conservation and to balance the process of responsible development. There will be those who do not agree with the need for the introduction of a conservation strategy for the Territory, saying that we are reacting to public pressure only, and that it is a passing phase. Mr Speaker, it is not a passing phase. In fact, in 1979, even before the World Conservation Strategy was issued, the Territory government adopted a statement of intent which I draw to the attention of honourable members.

The government adopts 2 fundamental objectives, equally important and interrelated: to rationally develop the Territory's resources and potential, eliminating unnecessary waste, for the public wealth; and to protect the environmental heritage, consisting of unique life forms, and the land which is the basis for their maintenance, and to pursue these objectives in a balanced way.

Therefore, the introduction of a strategy for the Territory is imperative if the Territory is to realise its true potential in the future. To date, the Territory has survived European settlement quite well in comparison with the rest of Australia, probably because our population is still reasonably sparse and our land has not been developed to the same extent as land in southern states. However, with the growing pastoral, agricultural, mining, fishing, tourism and service industries, the potential for manufacturing and secondary industries and a population which continues to grow, the Territory needs to provide for future conservation directions.

In the World Conservation Strategy, conservation is defined as the 'management of human use of natural resources to ensure that people can enjoy the greatest benefit from them, while providing for the needs of future generations'. This emphasises that conservation is not a negative force. It is not about stopping development, placing bans on mining, forestry, pastoral or other industries or about locking up land for the benefit of a minority. Conservation, as it is described in our discussion paper, is about examining human activities to prevent or overcome any environmentally damaging effects. It is a positive force embracing maintenance, sustainable use, restoration, vigilant stewardship and improvement, where necessary, of the natural environment for the good of the community.

I would ask all honourable members to consider seriously the issues I have raised and to assess this discussion paper with a view to providing useful comment. I will be ensuring that all sectors of the Territory community have the opportunity to comment and suggest appropriate ways in which to sustain our environment, and to work with us towards formulating a balanced approach to conservation and development with a view to developing a draft conservation strategy in the first half of next year. Press statements will be issued by my office and the Conservation Commission will be placing advertisements in Territory newspapers inviting public response. The commission is also preparing feature articles on aspects of conservation for placement in newspapers. The document will be mailed to community-based environment groups, public libraries, schools and any other interested parties who care to contact my office and request a copy. In addition, copies will be made available at Conservation Commission regional offices. Mr Speaker, I look forward to an enthusiastic response.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, I rise to reply to the Minister for Health and Community Services and Conservation's statement on the environment. I would like to suggest that we have just heard from the minister for things



green. In 2 days, he has presented 2 ministerial statements on environmental issues: the heritage proposal and this statement. I should add that the minister is true to his word on recycling. This morning, in a reply to a dorothy dixer on recycling, he chose not to waste resources on a separate response. Instead, he recycled a section from the statement that he has just delivered. I congratulate him on his conscientiousness.

Seriously, Mr Speaker, we need to look at the agenda that the minister has in mind. Has he had a vision to lead the CLP out of the wilderness of its environmental apathy into a newer and higher level of consciousness? However, while the political agenda is to try to create a facade of environmental concern, I wonder whether there is not also a personal agenda. Possibly, we are seeing the honourable minister trying to reassert himself in the power structure of the government, with aspirations to a leadership challenge at some time in the future. Or has he seen the writing on the wall indicating that the CLP will become insignificant in the next election and is he actually preparing to stand as a Green Independent? I wonder.

However, to come back to the real agenda, this government has begun a transformation from being distinctly red around the neck to adopting an appearance of all over green. Recently, the government has received some suggestions from marketing managers in terms of how to go about reselling itself. It possibly suggests that the 'C' in CLP stands for chameleon, signifying its ability to change its skin colour in an effort to blend with its surroundings. The analogy is quite appropriate because the CLP's change to green is like a chameleon's change - it is only skin deep. It is only a camouflage to allow it to get closer to its prey before attacking. Or, as it would appear in this situation, the CLP is using it as a way of hiding from predators, the voters at the next election, by disguising itself as something it is not and will never be: a party that is concerned about the environment.

In fact, the CLP is more akin to a fish out of water when it tries to move into the area of environmental consciousness. And, like a fish out of water, the CLP cannot survive in the fresh clean air of environmental concern. It will suffocate in its own double standards and contradictions. The only part of the CLP that will turn green is its gills, as it emerges from the primordial slime of past policies unadapted to the environmental change that is sweeping the world, policies which will lead to its eventual extinction from political significance.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BAILEY: Are we seeing a miracle at work, Mr Speaker, with the honourable minister being converted to green on the road to The Hague? No, I do not think so. It is just a cynical response to recent events and, in particular, a response to the Wanguri by-election during which CLP support was savaged by voters turning to the ALP and the Green Independents. That is a trend that would see this government swept out of office in the next general election. This statement must be seen for what it is, Mr Speaker: a reaction to the winds of political change. The CLP will be judged on its actions in the past, not its promises for the future. The credibility of this document fails on the basis of the government's past performance. It is an attempt to rewrite the history of the last 15 years in respect of the CLP government's attitude to the environment.

Mr Hatton: Are you saying that my statement is inaccurate?

Mr BAILEY: No matter what words have been used in the document, the balance that the minister refers to has been well and truly on the side of development and against the environment. There is no question that development and the environment need to be balanced and that sustainable growth is an attainable and necessary goal of government.

Whilst we might give the government some credit for the minister's mouthing of environmental platitudes, the credibility of the CLP in this area has to be closely scrutinised. Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the comments of the Deputy Chief Minister in relation to the role of the Office of the Supervising Scientist in environmental protection. He said: 'I am not denigrating the study of frogs and insects, but where is the return to the uranium industry?'. Again, in relation to the World Heritage listing of Kakadu, he said: 'The motion to register Kakadu was put forward by Ambassador Clark from Canada and seconded by that wimp, the Ambassador for Australia, who would have been put up against the wall together and shot'.

Mr Reed: Was that a true statement or not?

Mr BAILEY: Yes.

Mr Reed: It was. There you go.

Mr BAILEY: Both statements were made by the Deputy Chief Minister and both were recorded in Hansard in 1988.

Mr Speaker, whilst the discussion paper is welcome, the government cannot expect to gain any kudos for it until it changes its own modus operandi. Last year, when this government finally woke up to the fact that the Territory economy could not be supported by rhetoric alone, it introduced a strategy document called 'Territory On the Move'. What has happened to this wish list of things to do? Nothing. It was not a bad document. It was short on planning, contained nothing too objectionable, but there was no follow up. I fear that this document will suffer the same fate.

The government's track record is abysmal. One of the big problems with this statement is that the process for arriving at this strategy is not mentioned. There is talk but there is no action. For us to take the minister seriously, he needs to tell us how to get to an agreed strategy. Is it to be done through public meetings or discussion with interest groups? Is there a timetable? Are resources available to implement the strategy? These are the issues that need to be addressed.

I remind honourable members of a time when the honourable minister fulfilled a higher calling as Chief Minister, before falling from grace - or was he pushed? The honourable minister, then the Chief Minister, spent considerable amounts of public money in the attack on the World Heritage listing of Kakadu Stage 2, with quotes like: 'Kakadu Stage 2 is the environmental equivalent of a clapped-out Holden with most of the panel work damaged, the upholstery torn and the wheels falling off'. Or, following on, in relation to the Stage 2 listing: 'I will be fighting for the repeal of that legislation through whatever mechanism we can find'. I wonder whether that will be included in the conservation document that he has just released and the plan for the future of the Territory. Whilst I am sure the minister now regrets his comments in relation to Kakadu, he must understand that we in the opposition, and Territorians generally, need more than this statement to give him credit for a change of heart.

The Labor Party has long held the view that the future of the Territory and, indeed, the entire planet, is best assured through a philosophy of sustainable development. We may have suffered at the polls at times because of this approach but we have held to it. When we say that we intend to balance development with environmental considerations to ensure that future generations will not be limited because of our thoughtlessness in managing the environment, people accept this. Labor fully supports the concepts of planning and environment being inextricably tied together, in fact so much so that one of my shadow portfolios is planning, environment and conservation.

Mr Speaker, the government has again tried to steal a good policy idea from the Labor Party and to pretend that it is its own. The minister should acknowledge the fact that he is merely plagiarising ALP policies. Let us compare the record of this government with that of the ALP on commitment to the environment. Labor's approach in government will be guided by a number of principles. Environmental considerations will be integrated into all policy areas including soil conservation and primary industry, sustainable yields for the fishing industry, control of tourism to protect our natural assets, clear and indisputable guidelines for mining and clear guidelines for development of the built environment. My colleagues will expand on our intentions in some of these areas. We believe that public involvement is essential. Territorians must have confidence in the government's decision-making processes as they affect the environment. There has to be involvement in the planning process and the ability for the public to comment on environmental impact statements.

Mr Finch: Have you done an EIS for the lake at Leanyer?

Mr BAILEY: Where is the EIS for the clearing of 30 000 ha at Douglas Station? Has the public been allowed to comment? Will you be supervising the destruction as probably the largest land-clearing operation ever in the Territory proceeds? Will you be monitoring the effect of that on greenhouse emissions?

Mr Manzie: Which area?

Mr BAILEY: The 30 000 ha that you were asked about this morning during question time.

At the same time, the procedures and guidelines must be clear and concise so that developments which are acceptable are not unduly delayed.

Mr Speaker, I wish to refer to a practical application of that decision-making process in relation to the public. Labor undertook a 'planning for the people' exercise. Whilst we did not have the budget of the Hong Kong expo, we felt it important to involve people in the development of a concept of the Darwin of the future, this being a model for the development of other town plans. We found that, with a little prompting, a simple but clear set of drawings setting out ideas, and a display in the Smith Street Mall and at Casuarina, people gave us their ideas and became involved in the process. This is a model which the minister might like to follow. Rather than waiting in his office for people to come to him, he should make himself accessible.

Obviously, there is a need for clear guidelines. Everyone must know where they stand. Developers must know what they have to do. The rules of the game should not change halfway through, as occurred with Mt Todd. To balance development and environmental protection, a clear vision must be arrived at after broad discussion of the shape of our cities. The process for approval of developments within that vision must then be clearly enunciated. Our

current town plan is woefully lacking in detail in relation to how we want our town to develop. When we compare our town plans to those of Adelaide and Melbourne, it is hardly surprising that developers are frustrated by the lack of guidelines and that our towns, especially Alice Springs, are losing their character. Judging by the response of a number of members opposite yesterday, they do not seem to care about that.

In government, Labor will implement a conservation strategy which will integrate with the federal efforts outlined by the Prime Minister. Among the principal concerns will be the soil management program to address the problem of degradation and the protection of foreshores. It is interesting to note that this government has a foreshore protection plan. It is also interesting to note that it keeps changing. It used to apply to all of the foreshore and parkland from Myilly Point to East Point, including the parkland right up to Gardens Hill. Then, lo and behold, some of the area was no longer included in the foreshore protection zone. By coincidence, some time later, this government supported a rezoning proposal to build a hotel on this area. Given that the land was no longer part of the foreshore protection area, that was quite appropriate. I cannot help wondering, however, why its importance environmentally decreased to the point where it was no longer included in the coastal protection plan. I even wonder how many other areas will become less environmentally important when the CLP decides that it would like to use them for something else.

Other areas also require meaningful legislation. Yesterday, we heard about the introduction of heritage protection legislation. That has many problems which still need to be resolved. We need to look at impacts on tourism, at cane toad eradication programs, feral animal control, control of noxious plants and protection of the work environment. Mr Speaker, compare this approach with the actions of the CLP. It has spent money to oppose the World Heritage listing of Kakadu Stage 2. There appeared to be an almost complete absence of any emphasis on environmental impact statements prior to the Wanguri by-election. Our towns are being developed in a haphazard manner, with no limitations on building heights in Alice Springs and no discussion on the future shape of Darwin. It has opposed sacred sites legislation and the present Chief Minister has authorised the destruction of sacred sites.

As an example of the government's environmental concern, the document cites research into protection of the Gouldian finch. When the situation in relation to the Gouldian finch was first mentioned, all we had from ministers were press statements trying to downgrade the concerns.

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

Mr BAILEY: Read the press statements that your ministers issued. The honourable minister sitting next to you was quite happy yesterday to downgrade the heritage value of buildings in Alice Springs. Those other ministers downgraded the Gouldian finch as an endangered species when considering areas where the breeding sites would be affected by goldmines. It was only when the miners were convinced by the environmentalists and offered to cooperate that anything happened.

There appears to be a discrepancy between the number of EISs tabled and those listed in the back of the Conservation Commission's document. That may simply be an error, or is it because some of them are not made public?

We have raised concern over what has been happening at Tipperary Station and Douglas Station in relation to huge land clearing operations which appear

to be under way without environmental impact statements. It has been stated today that this is not required to be done. The lessee needs to indicate merely that he will clear huge areas. As has been stated by people in the scientific fraternity, one of the Territory's biggest contributions to ozone degradation is large scale burning of scrub areas.

Mr Manzie: It happens every year.

Mr BAILEY: Yes.

Mr Manzie: It is about time we stopped, isn't it? We ought to start improving some of the country.

Mr BAILEY: We are saying that we have landowners who are clearing huge areas and then burning. We have more and more rhetoric in the form of statements that have been made over many years. The foreshore committee was established 3 years ago. To my knowledge, it has yet to produce a report.

In his document, the minister referred to the world and national strategies for the environment. The world statement was released in 1981 and the national strategy in 1983. It is now 1989. I wonder why it took this government so long to decide to put forward a statement. Was it because of the Wanguri by-election? Was that what caused the rise of green concern within this government? It has been suggested that the Northern Territory is actually in better shape than anywhere else in Australia. In some areas, that appears true at first glance. If you look much more closely at it, areas around central Australia have been significantly degraded since white settlement. Recent research by the university has shown that there were large areas of quite dense forest around the Alice Springs area that were largely cut down for use in cattle stockyards. That change in a very delicate environment, the arid lands of central Australia, is the sort of thing we have to be careful to prevent.

Throughout the document, the honourable minister talks about input from concerned parties and information sharing. While it was indicated to me at lunchtime today that I would receive a reply, quite often we have been attacked for not trying to contribute to debate. Over 3½ weeks ago, I asked for briefings on matters which related to the subject matter of the minister's statement, briefings that would have been relevant had I been able to receive them prior to this debate. I believe the minister has sent a letter saying that I will be briefed after he has delivered his statement, so that I cannot obtain some of the facts and information which he may be concerned that I might like to use.

Mr Speaker, I will quote a few more comments from honourable members opposite which show their concern about environmental degradation. The member for Victoria River described those supporting the listing of Kakadu Stage 2 as a 'minority group of self-indulgent, self-important, moralistic rowdies'. As this government is trying to get onside with people concerned about conservation, its members might like to consider how they have described those people in the past. In a previous debate in this House, the member for Jingili spoke about the Labor proposal for a heritage commission, a commission such as that set up by the minister yesterday. The member for Jingili said: 'This legislation would raise another very costly and unnecessary barrier to the Territory's development'. He did not, however, apply that comment to the minister yesterday, nor did he add: 'It could have an horrendous impact on the Territory's mining industry and on the greenie vote'.

To finish off ...

Mr Setter: In what context did I say that?

Mr Reed: You cannot finish off. You have not told us what you would do yet.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, on a suggestion from another honourable minister about the Territory becoming a depot for the storage of high-level nuclear waste, another very pro-environmental concern which I am sure the Minister for Conservation would like to support, a member of the government said: 'The very mention of this aspect puts the flat-earthers and so-called conservationists into a dither of letter writing and graffiti splattering'. Again, concerns about the environment were downgraded.

Mr Speaker, I would like to move an amendment to the government's motion. I move that all words after 'that' be omitted and there be inserted in their stead 'this government stands condemned for its cynical, politically motivated and recently acquired concern about environmental issues'.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, I move that the amendment be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 18

Noes 6

Mr Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Tuxworth  
Mr Vale

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Ede  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mr Smith

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Noes 18

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Ede  
Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch

Mr Leo  
Mr Smith

Mr Firmin  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Tuxworth  
Mr Vale

Amendment negatived.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address this statement, particularly after the appalling performance we have just witnessed during the last 10 minutes from the government in its refusal to ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for MacDonnell cannot reflect on the motion or the decision of the vote.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, far be from me to reflect or seek to reflect on a vote or its outcome or the reasons for the government behaving in such a way, but I do believe I am well within the bounds of standing orders in suggesting that the government's motivation in this particular debate and its response to the debate have been conditioned by a particularly incisive contribution by the opposition spokesman on the environment. He portrayed in clear and absolute terms the cant and hypocrisy that characterises - I withdraw the word 'hypocrisy', Mr Speaker. It is redolent of lies. Far be it from me to suggest that the Country Liberal Party or the member for Nightcliff and Minister for Conservation actually tell lies. What I do suggest is that, whilst the minister may be advancing positions with respect to the environment that he may very well believe in, my colleague the shadow minister has adduced particular examples which demonstrate that very few government members share the views put forward by the minister in his statement. In my contribution to this debate, I intend to raise a couple of additional examples as well as picking a few holes in the comments made by the Minister for Conservation.

Let us start with the deputy leader of this newly-greened party, and if there were any member of this Assembly who would be most loath to wear a green hat it would have to be the Deputy Chief Minister, that wonderful old - to use his own words - warhorse for the uranium industry. Not for the Deputy Chief Minister are any of the debates about the relative value of mining and environmental protection. In none of his statements in this debate has the Deputy Chief Minister, the Minister for Mines and Energy, raised a doubt or suggested that the environmental impact statements which have been produced for various projects have been anything other than a waste of time. I look forward to hearing the Deputy Chief Minister informing this Assembly that he has had his vision on the Emmaus Road, and that his Pauline conversion to the environmental cause will lead him to get up and say: 'Yes, absolutely, Mr Speaker, I have a passionate belief in stringent, strict environmental protection, and I believe that the processes that have been set in train in that regard by governments around the country, including the Commonwealth government, are absolutely essential to a sensible balance between development and conservation'.

He never says it, Mr Speaker, but I think we will hear him say today: 'I believe, I believe'. It will be wonderful. While he is telling us how strongly he has come to believe, he might tell us about his pro-erosion policy. Do you remember the Deputy Chief Minister coming out with all that nonsense, Mr Speaker? He said that we might as well hasten this business because, even if we did not have mining, nature itself is eroding all sorts of things. We might as well do it quickly, he said. If we did not have erosion, we would not have Ayers Rock and we would not have Katherine Gorge.

Mr Coulter: You would not have the Australian coastline if it were not for erosion.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory being eroded by the Minister for Mines and Energy is exactly the sort of problem that the Minister for Conservation has. He need only to look to his right and to his left to know that he does not have too many friends in the government. In political terms, he can look only to his right because he is well and truly to the left of the government. If he looks to his right and casts his eye upon the Minister for Transport and Works, I do not think he will get too much support for what that minister will deride as mealy-mouthed greenie statements. If he looks to his left at the Deputy Chief Minister, not only will he not get any support, but he will meet with open derision. If we had Hansard reports of Cabinet debates, they would be terrific. 'Listen Steve, do you reckon there are votes in it?' 'All right, well shut up'. I think that would be about the level of the debate. They will not be having too many more of those Cabinet debates because they will not be there too much longer.

To reinforce the ineluctable conclusion that this government has newly found in environmental consciousness, let me just remind the minister of his performance when the opposition sought to refer to the Sessional Committee on the Environment the problem of land degradation, which is now becoming the subject of public debate right around this country. The whole of the southern part of the Northern Territory has been demonstrated to be subject to land degradation. I have a deadly serious interest in this. I believe that that matter should have been referred to the Sessional Committee on the Environment so that we could have sensible debate about those issues. However, members opposite knocked that on the head. They decided that they would simply ignore the issue of land degradation.

My point which I have made frequently in this Assembly and at meetings of its committees is that, if this legislature is to demonstrate a reasonable and rational attitude towards environmental issues, it is exactly those sorts of questions that need to be discussed by committees of this Assembly. These people opposite, who were creamed at the Wanguri by-election, have worked out that there are a few votes in green issues and have now decided to come up with days and days of these statements in the expectation that they can hoodwink the Territory electorate. They are Johnny-come-latelies to this debate. The Labor Party has been putting forward sensible suggestions, and not just about the easy issues which everybody agrees on. Everybody agrees that the bilby and the mala ought to be protected. This statement is as full of contentious conservation issues as any statement on motherhood would be. The Minister for Conservation and the Chief Minister believe that, if they stand Steve up for long enough saying nice things about the environment, they will convince people in the community. I have put them on notice that that just will not happen.

Their performance on the land degradation issue was appalling. Mention was made yesterday, and again today, of their appalling performance on



heritage protection. They believe that they can convince people that they have a good record on environmental issues. If they can show me that they have taken anything but an ostrich-like attitude to the hard issues, such as the uranium industry and land degradation, I might think again. However, the fact is that, as the Hansard record of this Assembly shows, that just does not stand up.

The other matter that I want to raise is the Kings Canyon National Park. The Minister for Conservation was saying what a wonderful job has been done with that park. I think that there are aspects of that development of which the government can be proud.

Mr Perron: It would not be there if we had not taken the initiative to secure it as a park.

Mr BELL: That is absolutely right, Mr Speaker. However, in his statement, the Minister for Conservation said that it was all plain sailing, that there were no disagreements and that it had all been decided in a trice. The fact is that the Kings Canyon National Park was a very interesting example of trying to accommodate competing land uses. I am disappointed that the Minister for Conservation failed to give us a full understanding of the complexity of the issues involved in that area. The competition between national park interests, conservation interests, tourism interests and pastoral interests continues to be of concern.

Let us forget about the contentious Aboriginal land rights issues for a moment. Let us talk about those issues that are dominant right across Australia and the western world. There was no mention in the minister's statement of the protracted negotiations with Tempe Downs Pty Ltd. There was no mention in the minister's statement of the trade-off of the south-west corner for other areas of that property. Saying that that had been a simple issue was tantamount to ignoring the protracted issues that are involved.

With those few examples, I believe I have demonstrated the essential cynicism and political opportunism that the government has adopted with respect to this issue. I do not believe that it will be able to convince anybody that it is fair dinkum. It will not be able to convince anybody until we hear people like the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister actually saying sensible things about how they balance the complex issues, the politically high profile issues, of uranium mining, wetlands conservation, the protection of Coronation Hill and the integrity of the Alligator Rivers system, and the protection of Ayers Rock as a tourist asset vis-a-vis increasing tourist numbers. There was not a word about those issues.

Mr Reed: What is your position?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I have raised all of those issues in debate in this Assembly. They are difficult issues. In one sentence, I have mentioned 3 issues, each of which would require a day's debate in order to do justice to it. When the opposition says that there are complexities that this Assembly needs to consider, all we have hurled at us by members opposite is simplistic developmentalism. They believe they can make mealy-mouthed ...

Mr Reed: What would you do?

Mr BELL: ... statements like this and convince people.

I will pick up the interjection from the member for Katherine. I offer a challenge to the member for Katherine. If he wants to ask me what I would do in specific terms about any of those specific issues, either I will tell him or I will refer to comments I have made in Hansard debates on the issues that bother him. He might find it particularly enlightening. I am sick and tired of the simplistic attitude which members opposite take to those complex issues in this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I think I have demonstrated ably, even if the government was not prepared to accept the amendment, the cynicism and political opportunism which have characterised not only this statement but the government's general, new-found quasi-conscious attitude towards environmental issues.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, this afternoon we have really seen some appalling examples of ineptitude in debate. The performance of the member of Wanguri was disgraceful. It was lacking in any substance and it was a shame that members of the media were not here to see the beginning of his most pitiful exhibition.

The premises of his argument were based obviously on the fact that he has only been in the Territory for 2 or 3 years. His lack of knowledge of what has occurred and what steps this government has taken in the last 11 years was abysmal. It would not have taken very much for the opposition's spokesman on the environment to have done a little research and reading to find out what has occurred during that time. Had he done so, his comments might have had some significance. If he is to make a positive contribution, he has to be factual. We are talking about important issues. He has won his by-election and it is time for him to stop electioneering and to start coming up with some substance.

It is no good for the honourable member to stand up and say that the Territory government has suddenly turned green because the minister has commented on 2 environmental issues in the last week, one being heritage and the other being this particular discussion document. That is a garbage argument. The minister has responsibilities which relate to those issues. Had the member for Wanguri taken the slightest amount of time to do some research, he would have found out what has been going on for 11 years. More to the point, Mr Speaker, why does he think the Territory is in the condition that it is in today? Why does he think that the air is clean? Why does he think that the waters are clean? Why does he think that there are animals in the bush and people can live 13 miles down the road in the bush? Let him try to do that in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide or Perth. It cannot be done there. It has been done here because the people who live in the Territory have a commitment to trying to keep the Territory environmentally sound.

At the same time, members on this side of the House realise that protection of the environment has to go hand in hand with development because we have to provide jobs for our children and we have to provide facilities for our community. We have to provide the ability to become economically independent. At the same time, we have to make sure that our environment remains pristine, that we do not have polluted beaches, polluted air and concrete jungles. We do not want the problems which the states have, where people cannot see a native animal or hear a native bird or see a bit of native flora. We are committed to continue with the last 11 years work to ensure that that sort of situation does not arise here.

It is abysmal to describe the CLP government as suddenly having found a new green side. If the member for Wanguri does not want to do any research, perhaps he should just start reading the newspapers. The media comments of the last few months have been very pertinent. They have pointed out that the Territory is second to nobody in this country in terms of its environmental performance. We can stand very proudly on our record during the last 10 years. The member for Wanguri said that we will be judged by our actions of the last 10 years. I would be proud to be judged on our environmental performance over the last 10 years because it has been the best in the country. It was absolutely appalling to hear the member for Wanguri stand up and read a load of drivel which would receive a D-minus if it were written by a third or fourth grader.

The honourable member referred to the Deputy Chief Minister's comments on the uranium mining industry. Mr Speaker, I think it is very important that we realise what we are talking about today. We are talking about a discussion paper entitled 'On Balance - Towards a Conservation Strategy for the Northern Territory'. We are not talking about what the member for Wanguri thinks is wrong with the Territory government. We are not talking about what he perceives to be the problems. We are talking about developing a strategy for the future. The discussion document has been well researched and has been released for public discussion. It is for Territorians to participate in that discussion to ensure that we all move towards our goal of continuing to maintain our environment. Why then, when things are going pretty well, should we have an environmental strategy? Obviously, we have to have a strategy to take into account the vigorous growth that is occurring in the Territory. We need to avoid some of the environmental pitfalls that have befallen other parts of our country.

Mr Speaker, look at the monstrous hole in the ground in the Latrobe Valley in Victoria. It has totally destroyed the environment, including cities and fauna which are gone forever. It is a disaster, pumping hydrocarbons into our atmosphere. It is disgraceful. As you drive around the Victorian countryside you see rolling green hills where once there was forest. In New South Wales, there is open-cut coal mining and the seas are polluted beyond anyone's imagination. The environment is unfit for human occupation. Those are good Labor states which have suffered 10 years of good Labor Party environmental protection and good ALP environmental policies. They are disasters!

What about the situation in South Australia? The Murray River is just about poisoning the people of Adelaide. That is as a result of good ALP environmental policies. Uranium mining is supposedly safe in South Australia because it is a good ALP area. There is open-cut mining, underground mining and a giant mess. However, all that is all right because it has occurred under the ALP's environmental regime. In Western Australia, the wheat fields are disappearing under salt. That is all part of the ALP's environmental policy. One has only to look around the country to see the results.

Here comes the Leader of the Opposition, the first member of the opposition to be present in the Chamber during my speech ...

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, the record of the Labor states shows just how much interest the ALP has in the environment. Everywhere the ALP has had its finger in the environmental pie, it has created a mess. Nobody can deny that. Yet members of the ALP opposition in this House stand up and say: 'Let us do

it our way'. Heaven forbid, Mr Speaker! The community does not want to see another Western Australia or New South Wales. They do not want to go swimming in polluted oceans or see our countryside turned into salt swamps. We know the sort of deals the ALP does. Woodchipping is an example: 'She is all okay as long as we get a swing on the side'. That is how the ALP goes about things. We do not do business that way, as the last 11 years have shown. The community does not want it done the ALP's way.

I hear the Leader of the Opposition chuckling. He has come in after the debate has been under way for a couple of hours. He thinks that the community would like to see things done the way they are done around the rest of the country by the ALP. What a disaster, Mr Speaker.

The member for Wanguri had to throw in his bit about town planning, the part that it plays, and what a mess the Territory town planning strategy is in. Mr Speaker, when we review our town plans, do we get a single comment from the ALP? Not a peep!

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: Not a single tiny submission. Members opposite like to stand up and make a lot of noise but, when it has come to the crunch, their contribution to today's debate has been typical. They have not raised a single constructive issue or made a single constructive comment. It is absolutely appalling. They cannot stand up forever and make noise. If they say that the strategy is incorrect, let us see where it is incorrect and let us see where we should be going. There was not a word to say that we should not be doing this or we should not be doing that. There was not a word to say: 'This is where we should be going'. There was nothing but the same tired old rhetoric. You cannot fool all of the people all of the time, Mr Speaker, and the opposition is fast running out of credibility in this area. It continues to try to attack the Territory government but the runs are on the board.

People have only to walk outside and have a look around, or to walk down to the beach. In what other Australian capital city can you walk from one end of the city limits to the other without traversing private property?

Mr Smith: Perth.

Mr MANZIE: Nowhere. Go down and have a look.

Mr Smith: I have.

Mr MANZIE: See if you can walk from one end of the city limits to the other.

What sort of changes do they want to make? Let us hear that, Mr Speaker. The record we can stand on is the best in the country, and if members of the opposition have problems with it, let them point to where the problems are. Let them say what is wrong. They cannot do it and, if they try to, their comments are not based on fact.

What was the member for MacDonnell talking about? He says that only the ALP puts forward sensible issues. Only the ALP is sensible on the environment. He says, 'Do not worry about what you are doing. Everyone agrees that you can look after the bilby and the mala. That is simple stuff'. Well, it is not so simple because nowhere else in the country is it being

done. If it is so simple, why doesn't the ALP do it in Victoria, Western Australia, New South Wales or South Australia? It is really simple. I will tell you why they do not do it, Mr Speaker, it is because they are not fair dinkum about the environment. They like to talk on it, but the greenies have woken up to them and they are worried about it. They are saying, 'Oh, look, we are green'. How have they woken up to it? The greenies have woken up to it and they have shown that by shifting their vote. The federal minister is running around saying that they will have to close down Coronation Hill because it is dreadful stuff.

Mr Speaker, we had some comments from the member for MacDonnell about Coronation Hill and uranium mining. Let us just have a look at multiple land use. Multiple land use is a concept which inspires much debate. The discussion paper points out that the Territory will be guided by the World Conservation Strategy. Multiple land use is not a CLP government idea. It is not something shonky, as the member for Wanguri tried to infer. The World Conservation Strategy advises, in the chapter on rational land use allocation, that we should arrange for multiple use management of relative ecosystems to take advantage of compatibilities. That is what we base our programs on. The National Conservation Strategy endorses the World Conservation Strategy and that is the way we go.

We have many examples of successful land use management in the Territory. Just off the top of my head, Gurig National Park is a good example. But what about uranium mining? In 1978, the Fox Royal Commission, after conducting the most exhaustive environmental study in Australian history, concluded that the mines could be developed subject to safeguards. However, as the discussion document indicates, this recommendation was set aside by the Commonwealth government for other than environmental reasons. We all know that is factual, and we all know why it was done. It was done because Australia has a federal ALP government which tries to pretend that it is green and tries to say: 'Look, this is evil stuff, this uranium, and we are here to look after you. Vote for us. We will look after you'.

In its foolish blundering, the ALP is cutting down on the export of uranium, the only environmentally safe form of electricity production available to the world today whilst, simultaneously, it exports thousands and thousands of tonnes of coal which will be used to pump poisons into our atmosphere. Australians will suffer as a result but, to cater to greenies and short-term votes, Labor is doing that.

The Territory government is very proud of its record. This strategy really needs to be endorsed by all Territorians. We need to receive constructive comment, not the sort of garbage we have heard so far. Members opposite cannot keep on waving their hands around and making noises without coming up with something constructive. If they come up with something constructive, we would like to hear it and, if it is any good, we will endorse it. But the sort of rubbish we have heard so far is just that - rubbish.

The challenge is there. If they want to keep their credibility, let them go, but if their spokesman for the environment came forward with their best shot, they are in big trouble, because we can stand on our record of the last 11 years and we do not have any hesitation in doing so.

Mr Speaker, I endorse the strategy, and I endorse the statement made by the honourable minister.

Mr SMITH: (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, so that the Minister for Lands and Housing is left in no doubt, we certainly will not be making a formal submission to the Northern Territory government on this matter because we have reached the stage where we are no longer prepared to present our good ideas and have them stolen by the government. Let me make it clear that members on this side of the House are a fair way down the track towards developing a comprehensive planning, conservation and environment statement, one that can be taken seriously, not one that is arrived at by a party following the flavour-of-the-month policy that the honourable members opposite obviously follow. We have already taken the first and perhaps most significant step toward that. We have a shadow ministry which picks up planning, conservation and environment issues in a coordinated and coherent way, unlike the honourable members opposite who are trying to convince the people of the Northern Territory that they have a sincere interest in this particular area but cannot even organise their ministerial portfolios to reflect that.

Let me make it very clear that this side of the House does not believe that it is possible to implement a comprehensive policy on the broad conservation issues unless that is reflected in the structure of the ministry. Clearly, the government is not serious about these matters if it continues to have a Minister for Conservation, a Minister for Lands and Housing, and other ministers with bits and pieces of planning, conservation and the environment coming within their portfolio responsibilities. If the government were serious about these matters, that would be reflected in its ministerial arrangements. The fact that it is not makes both ourselves and the general public suspicious about what it is up to. Let us hope for the sake of the Northern Territory that it is more than a political exercise that the government is involved in, because these are the important issues. These are the issues that need to be addressed and they certainly have high priority indeed amongst all the people in the Northern Territory at present.

Let us not forget the message of Wanguri, which was that people in the Northern Territory, in the northern suburbs of Darwin, were and are concerned about environmental issues and are prepared to put them high on their agenda. They want to see parties and independent candidates addressing these issues seriously. The contents of the document before us indicate that the government recognises that the issues need to be addressed but is not prepared to address them coherently at this stage.

Of course the honourable members opposite are handicapped by their track record, and 2 of the worst offenders are the Deputy Chief Minister and the minister whose statement we are now debating. Who can forget the outrageous comments made by both honourable ministers in relation to World Heritage listing of Kakadu Stage 2? Outrageous comments were made by each of them. Now they expect us to take them at face value and to believe that they have seen the light on the road to Damascus or the light on the road from the Wanguri by-election and are prepared to change their spots. I think it will take more than a draft discussion paper to convince people that that is the case. They are indeed under a great handicap in trying to convince the population of the Northern Territory that they are serious about conservation issues.

Let me give you one example, Mr Speaker. The document talks about multiple land use management, a concept that needs to be seriously considered and supported. From reading the section of the document on multiple land use management, you would not know that the major debate on multiple land use management in the Northern Territory so far has been concentrated on whether people should be able to mine the hell out of Kakadu Stage 2. The document

talks about multiple land use management, and gives Gurig National Park as an example. It says that multiple land use management means providing for Aborigines still living in an area, and managing a park and a discreet tourist facility there. That is very sensible and we strongly supported the government's efforts in Gurig National Park and the legislation when it was proposed.

However, to say that multiple land use management means putting in place discreet tourist facilities in national parks is being less than honest with the people of the Northern Territory. The Deputy Chief Minister in particular has said that multiple land use means mining the hell out of Kakadu Stage 2. Why don't members opposite come clean? Why don't they issue a discussion document that says what they mean instead of pussyfooting around and giving absurd examples of what multiple land use means in the eyes of the government? We are preparing a strategy by talking to people and actually canvassing opinions instead of issuing a document and then being surprised when there is no response.

Mr Hatton: The Environment Centre supports our direction.

Mr SMITH: The Environment Centre says that the words are okay. In his response, Bob Ellis said that they were looking for the government to indicate some muscle in terms of ensuring that the words mean something.

A major international group was established to examine matters such as those referred to in the discussion document. It was established by the United Nations under the chairpersonship of the Prime Minister of Norway and, in 1987, it produced a document called 'Our Common Future'. The concepts it contained are similar to those in the discussion document which, in turn, is based to some extent on the position paper issued by the Prime Minister of Australia earlier this year. Everybody talks about the marriage between economy and ecology and recognises that the issues of human and economic development, environmental quality and natural resource husbandry are highly interdependent. We have not broken any new ground in this discussion paper. We are simply recognising what has happened in the world and in Australia by stating that, in determining the direction of the Northern Territory, there is a need to consider issues other than simple development issues.

The concept of 'sustainable development' referred to in the report of the Bruntland Commission is particularly important. The report defines it basically as growth which respects environmental constraints. It says that 'environmental concerns must be integrated into political and economical decision-making'. As the member for Wanguri said, an important element in considering the bona fides of the Northern Territory government on this matter is how far it is prepared to say that environmental concerns must or should be integrated into the political and economic decision-making process. Until the government establishes appropriate structures to enable that to occur, there must be serious doubt about how genuine it is about that issue.

It is interesting that the structural question, the question of the organisation of government departments to ensure that these values are promoted and protected, is not even mentioned in the discussion paper. Thus, a good concept is being advanced by the government without the recognition that, if it is to be properly implemented, the government itself and the structures of government have to change. There is no doubt that, without a commitment across all departments to conservation and environmental values, we will not get results. There is no point in the Conservation Commission attempting to implement those values right across the departmental structure

on behalf of the Northern Territory government, as is occurring at present. It simply will not work. I hope that the Minister for Conservation has advanced that argument - and he probably has - within his own party structure. I hope that he persists in doing so in order to convince those members of Cabinet who are not convinced at present. A government cannot adequately put into place the programs that it wants in terms of conservation and the environment if it leaves such matters in the hands of 1 or 2 departments without integrating them across all government structures.

That is the key point that I want to make today. Other elements have been picked up by the member for Wanguri. To my mind, the key test of the government's commitment to conservation and environmental values is whether it can structure itself so as to give environmental and conservation values their due regard in the further development of the Northern Territory. Let us not forget that we are in a new era of growth. It was recognised by the Minister for Conservation yesterday on radio that the old policy of development at all costs is no longer acceptable and that we need to be more responsive and receptive to what is occurring in the broader world. We need to recognise that we live on a very fragile earth. We need to take care of it because, more than at any other time in our history, we have the capacity to ruin it, not only for ourselves but for our children. We need to develop a surer and more deft touch. We need policies based on sustaining and expanding the environmental resource capital of our planet rather than depleting it.

Mr Coulter: What does that mean?

Mr SMITH: It means, Mr Speaker, that we can no longer afford to go out there blindly and mine everything in sight.

Mr Coulter: When did we ever do that?

Mr SMITH: We haven't. But, Mr Speaker, given the Deputy Chief Minister's inclinations, without the reining in that he has obviously suffered in Cabinet and without the curb placed on him by public opinion in the Northern Territory, he certainly would have been pursuing that. Given a free hand, he certainly would have mined Kakadu Stage 2. It is interesting to see how the debate has changed. We have a commitment now from the federal opposition that there will be no mining in Stages 1 and 2 of Kakadu. That commitment shows fairly simply and graphically how much matters have shifted and, even though the Deputy Chief Minister has not sensed the winds of change, his more perceptive colleagues in Canberra obviously have. There has been a decided shift in people's attitudes to the environment. They see it now as a very important issue and are prepared to judge governments very much on how they treat environmental issues. It is quite clear that, in that context, the Deputy Chief Minister has become a liability. It has been interesting to see how his efforts have been toned down since the Wanguri by-election. We no longer see him promoting the establishment of toxic waste dumps in the Tennant Creek area, nuclear waste repositories in the Northern Territory ...

Mr Coulter: That was long before the Wanguri by-election.

Mr SMITH: Of course it was long before the Wanguri by-election. The point is that I have not heard you promoting those projects since the Wanguri by-election, have I?

Mr Coulter: What about medical waste? What are we going to do with that? Put it in cardboard boxes underneath the beds at the hospital, or what?



Mr SMITH: No. We have to find satisfactory methods of disposing of our own wastes. However, no one in the Northern Territory wants to see it becoming the nuclear waste dump for the world. For some time, members on this side of the House have consistently put that view.

Mr Speaker, let me conclude. The government's action in putting out the discussion paper is welcome. It is handicapped, however, by its own bad track record on this particular subject. It can demonstrate its bona fides by setting in place a proper structure within government to look at and implement the proposals. Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that, in the lead-up to the next election, conservation, environment and planning issues will be very important indeed.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I do not resile from the pro-erosionist strategies and the examples that I used to demonstrate that, without erosion, we would not have the Katherine Gorge and our river systems. Indeed, the wonderful escarpment at Kakadu would not exist if it had not been for erosion. The beautiful and rugged Australian coastline would not exist if erosion had not occurred, and Ayers Rock would not exist if there had been no erosion. If anybody wants to stand up and deny that, in this parliament or anywhere else in Australia, they can go ahead, but the fact is that those wonderful creations, which are among the most sought-after tourist destinations in the world because of their beauty, have been created by erosion. I simply make that point.

At the North Australia Development Seminar last year, when I was a guest speaker together with Phillip Toyne from the Australian Conservation Foundation, I said that whilst I was a pro-erosionist in that manner, I was anti-soil degradation. I stand by that as pure fact, not fiction. We have to have sustainable growth and we have to be able to pay for the historic degradation at some mine sites around the world, particularly in the Northern Territory. I am talking about such things as the tailings dump at Batchelor, which cost some \$16m to return to a stable condition. That sort of thing has to be done. However, we have to create the wealth required to restore those historically damaged areas of land. There is only one way to do that, and that is by creating more wealth.

I have said many times that we have to do 4 things: grow, show, make or mine. If we do not do any of those 4 things, we can forget it. People can sit in this Assembly and utter all the nice words and buzz phrases that they can muster. That will not fix anything. We have had some problems, particularly with some of the old uranium mines. Moline is a typical example of an area which has been rehabilitated and cleaned up. There is still some work to be done but it will be cleaned up. It will be cleaned up because it is now a goldmine producing almost 3 t of gold a year. The rehabilitation work on the old uranium mine is being carried out as new wealth is created.

If anybody wants to sit in this Assembly and tell me how the environment can be protected or how historically degraded land can be restored without creating the wealth needed to pay for that to be done, they can go right ahead with all the flash words they can muster. Out there in the real world, it will require money - huge amounts in some cases. The opposition can sit in here and say that it will not have anything to do with nuclear waste even as millions of tonnes of brown coal are being burnt, but these are matters which go well beyond the boundaries of the Northern Territory or even of Australia. Every one of us on this living planet has to understand what is being done to the planet.

Members opposite might like to consider the example of India, which plans to treble its coal output in this financial year. It is not the same type of coal as we have here in Australia. In fact, the pollutants which will be generated by the increased consumption of that Indian coal are equivalent to the those from the total amount of coal burnt in all the OECD countries combined. It is all very well to talk about the CFCs from refrigerators when a country like India will treble its coal production this year, with an impact on the Greenhouse Effect greater than that of all OECD countries combined. Members opposite need to get out into the real world and have a look at what is going on. The nice words and sweet flowing phrases which we have heard from them today mean absolutely nothing. The fact is that things like repairing the damage done by soil degradation in this country over 100 years of neglect will cost money, and lots of it.

Here in the Northern Territory, the mining industry is castigated. What terrible people members of the mining industry are! In Kakadu Stage 1, mining activity occupies 4 km<sup>2</sup>. That 4 km<sup>2</sup> has produced \$1200m of wealth. Within the Department of Mines and Energy, we have the Alligator Rivers Research Unit, a unit that is now world renowned for its environmental concerns. It is second to none in terms of environmental control. The former federal Minister for the Environment, Hon Barry Cohen, was asked in the federal parliament whether there had been any cases of environmental damage as the result of the Ranger Mine being located in the park. His reply was that there had not been one case, not one. So let us forget the nonsense about the impact of mining and compare it with the impact of the tourist industry, the 4-wheel drivers and the 100 000 people a year who travel through Kakadu. Compare the impact of the mining industry with the impact of farming. We should get off the backs of the miners, Mr Speaker. They have proven themselves, beyond doubt, to be responsible and to have environmental regimes and standards unequalled in Australia's history.

Interestingly, a federal minister, Hon John Kerin, has pointed out during the last few weeks that we will have to do something because Ayers Rock is being eroded, this time predominantly by tourists.

Mr Bailey: Should we ban them?

Mr COULTER: Listen! You had your say and you said nothing. The member for Wanguri used sweet flowing phrases which meant nought. He contributed nothing to this debate. If he would like to listen for 5 minutes, I will give him a lesson on what is happening in the real world and what he will have to do if he wants to fix things instead of sitting here spouting cute little phrases. The rhetoric will get him nowhere.

The other day, Hon John Kerin pointed out that the economy has more direct significance for Australians than the environment and, Mr Speaker, that is true. However, it is not a case of getting on with the economy at all costs, not at all. The requirements for EISs and PERs, the standards of the environmental unit within the Department of Mines and Energy, and Commonwealth and Northern Territory legislation governing such projects as the Ranger Uranium Mine are the stiffest in the world. It is the most over-regulated mine, if you like, in the world.

As far as the nonsense about not mining in Kakadu Stage 2 is concerned, I defy the member for Wanguri. If I took him out to my block and stood him amongst some trees, and then took him for a drive to Kakadu Stage 2 or 3 or anywhere near the member for Arnhem's country, he would not be able to tell the difference. That would apply from east of the Pine Creek geosyncline to

west of the Pine Creek geosyncline. Some of that country, particularly in Stages 2 and 3, is exactly as Senator Evans described it - clapped-out buffalo country. That is all it is. It does not have the beauty of the escarpment and wetland country which nonsense television items depict in their coverage of the Coronation Hill issue. What a lot of nonsense! The federal member for Kalgoorlie, a member of the same party as the member for Wanguri, said that he fell about on the floor laughing when he heard people talking about the pristine fragility of Coronation Hill. It was mined extensively in the 1950s without any of the controls which exist today. Has anybody come up with evidence of environmental damage caused by that mining? Not one case of environmental damage has been demonstrated to have occurred as a result of mining at Coronation Hill, with 1950s ...

A member: Uncontrolled mining.

Mr COULTER: Uncontrolled, using 1950s technology and without the strict restrictions of today.

I might also add that mining for the Northern Territory, in both minerals and hydrocarbons, is worth about \$1700m today. That is why you can afford the luxury of the chair that you are sitting on, Mr Speaker, because somebody out there is toiling and producing wealth from the ground. That is why we can sit in here, and that is why Australians can be comfortable, because we are producing 10% of Australia's export wealth.

That is one reason why we can put money back into the Conservation Commission. You have only to have a look at the Conservation Commission's budget and the number of people that are now employed by the commission, to see that this is not a new phenomenon that the Northern Territory government has embarked upon. There has been steady growth in the Conservation Commission now for 10 years, and this Northern Territory has an unblemished record of being able to look after its environment, with the wealth that it has ploughed back. On a per capita basis, its performance is better than that of any state in Australia.

Honourable members can have a look at the Yarra River, or Sydney Harbour if they like, or the Adelaide Hills. Next time they are flying into a capital city anywhere in Australia - Perth, Adelaide, Canberra, Sydney or Melbourne - they should look at the surrounding hills, which are being demolished by blue metal miners in their rush to get aggregate for concrete to sustain the jungles that they are building. If you fly around the Northern Territory, Mr Speaker, you will not see one scar like those in the Adelaide Hills. Let us forget this nonsense, Mr Speaker, that we ...

Mr Bailey: We do not have any hills around Darwin.

Mr COULTER: There are a number of hills around Darwin, Mr Speaker, but the honourable member would not have been south of the Berrimah crossroads on his holidays. He would not even know where it is. In fact, it was interesting to hear 1984 mentioned earlier in reference to the airport. I do not think the member for Wanguri was here in 1984, and I would be very surprised ...

Mr Bailey interjecting.

Mr COULTER: Were you here in 1984?

Mr Bailey: Yes.

Mr COULTER: What time in 1984?

Mr Bailey: From about 12.01 on 1 January till about ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I take that back. He was here in 1984, and in that case it is a shame that he does not know about the hills around Darwin. But I will return to the point I was making.

The Leader of the Opposition sits in here and uses cute phrases as he talks about no mining in Kakadu Stage 2. What does he think is happening at Ranger at the moment, as we speak? What does he think will happen at Jabiluka? What does he think will happen at Koongarra? Does he think that those mines will not proceed?

Mr Smith: What do you think is going to happen there?

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, they will go ahead. What does the Leader of the Opposition think will happen in Kakadu Stage 3, at Coronation Hill? Will it proceed? Yes, it will, as sure as ...

Mr Smith: When?

Mr COULTER: Well, that is up to your federal government, at the moment.

Mr Smith: That is right.

Mr COULTER: The people there are saying that it will proceed. Even as late as last week, Senator Richardson was saying that he had never said that Coronation Hill would not go ahead. That was after Mr Hawke came back and said that the Kakadu decision was political.

Mr Speaker, as I said, honourable members cannot sit in here uttering the cute little phrases that I have heard in this debate, and say that that will fix up the environment. It will require a great deal of wealth to fix up the results of historical mining and pastoral activities. It will also take government decisions. I used the example of the \$16m it took to clean up the tailings dam at Batchelor. We cannot sit in here and pretend that, if we come up with the greatest, sweetest flowing phrase of all time, everything will be all right with the environment. It will not. We cannot sit in here and deny the global consequences of such things as brown coal production in India, which will produce as much pollution as the total of that produced by all the OECD countries.

We cannot just sit in here while the Canadians blow up Cigar Mountain and Key Lake and get on with the job of creating wealth. I understand that the International Environment Convention will be held in Vancouver some time next year. The Canadian government puts on various shows like that from time to time, as it did when it ran off to the World Heritage Convention saying that we could not mine Kakadu while, at the same time, it was getting on with the job, blowing up another mountain or tearing the wall out of another lake. Let us not all sit in this Chamber believing that we will be snug and secure if we look after our little part of the world, and that everything will be all right. The fact is that it will not, and it will take more than the cute little words I have heard today from the Leader of the Opposition and the members for Wanguri and MacDonnell to fix the problems we have.

As for the birds at Mt Todd, the Gouldian finch could be bred in pest proportions. The technology is available to us today. In fact, the Conservation Commission has killed 79 Gouldian finches this year in the cause of science. It has thousands of them. Actually, it has 340. They can be bred in captivity. They can be bred anywhere. If it is an extinct animal and there are worries about the mining at Mt Todd ...

Mr Bailey: If it is extinct, it is too late.

Mr COULTER: If it is getting close to extinction or whatever you want. The facts are that they can be bred and you can buy them in pet shops anywhere. They can be bred in captivity and released into the wild. We were down at Timber Creek the other day and the member for Victoria River was almost pecked to death by a flock of these Gouldian finches which are supposedly almost extinct and only breed in the Mt Todd region. What a lot of garbage! They are not peculiar to the Mt Todd region. They can be seen in many zones and many areas right across the Northern Territory. I suppose they all fly home around Easter to the Mt Todd area to breed in the salmon gums. They make the trip home from the Victoria River region. The members for Katherine and Victoria River can probably attest to that. They have probably seen flocks of them coming across from Timber Creek every year to breed around Mt Todd. If honourable members want to believe that that is their only breeding ground in the Northern Territory, that fits in with the other nonsense we heard here. The facts are that Mt Todd is not the only area where Gouldian finches breed. You could breed them to pest proportions if you wanted to. The science and the technology are available for us to do that today.

The bilby is a classic example. I have a lot of empathy with the bilby because he runs around digging holes everywhere. I have seen him at the Conservation Commission's nature park. The bilby was supposed to be extinct and gone forever. Since the park opened, 3 have been bred and they will soon take over the entire nocturnal display. That is another example. Let us not regress and say: 'Pull down the shutters. It is all too hard. Let us get back to the cave. Let us not scratch another part of the Northern Territory. We do not need the wealth. Let us fix up what the tourists, the pastoralists, agriculturalists and the miners are doing'. Where will the wealth come from? It has to come from somewhere. That wealth has to be created. Under the environmental conditions and controls that are imposed on mining in particular, I am confident that those past mistakes will never be repeated.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt that people become emotional about conservation issues. Today's debate certainly has not done anything for our comfort in this House. I have not witnessed the expulsion of so much hot air resulting in so relatively little substance for a long time.

The member for Wanguri started off in typical opposition fashion. It could be one of the reasons why the ALP will stay in opposition for some time. The CLP can take a lesson from this too. I do not think either of the 2 main parties has recognised that people in the community are sick and tired of this pseudo-schoolboy bickering about subjects: 'I can do better than you'. 'No you can't'. 'Yes I can'. Sometimes the CLP has good ideas that the ALP should back and vice versa. However, they will not do that. I commented yesterday on the greening of the CLP and the fact that we have been presented with another statement on conservation issues today is symptomatic of that.

Rather than bagging the government as the opposition did, I would say that it is about time that it considered matters such as those put forward in the minister's speech and the discussion document. There is a need to be constructive. It is very easy to be destructive in relation to other people's ideas but it is rather more difficult to be constructive. It is even more difficult to agree that the other person is partly right. Only a strong person or a strong party can agree that the other person or other party is partly right. It is very easy to disagree but it is very hard to agree that the other person is right to some extent.

Mr Speaker, I have said before that it wearies me to hear all these noble words coming forth from the mouths of pseudo-conservationists. I have been living conservation for years. It really makes me sick and tired to hear both sides of the House here talking and talking about conservation.

Mr Reed: What do you feed all those goats on?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I grow pasture for my goats.

Mr Speaker, they talk about conserving flora and fauna, conserving soil and all sorts of other conservation issues. Let them try living conservation for a while. They will see that it is bloody hard work but that it can still be done.

I was very interested to hear the member for MacDonnell talking about making hard decisions and soft decisions. He talked about hard ones and soft ones. Obviously, he is the only one in doubt about hard ones and soft ones. The member for MacDonnell tends to preach a bit, and he tends to bash us about the ears from time to time. Today we heard the green gospel according to Neil. His version of conservation seems to be a perpetuation of the state of the country prior to 1788. We cannot turn back the clock. We have to live with what we have today and, if honourable members use their common sense, we can have development coexisting with conservation. It can be done and, sensibly, it should be done.

The honourable minister said that the conservation strategy would focus on the integration of development and conservation, the concept of sustainable development and the preservation of the Territory's genetic diversity. Nobody could argue with any of that, Mr Speaker. The question is, what action will occur in relation to those focal points of the conservation strategy? Will they just be nice words on paper or will they be developed further? The title of the discussion paper is 'On Balance - Towards a Conservation Strategy for the Northern Territory'. The key word is 'balance'. It is possible to have development together with consideration of conservation issues.

It always makes me smile rather cynically to see that the people who seem to have the most to say about conservation issues are those who benefit from activities like mining and farming. I believe that environmentalists are becoming a little more constructive in their criticism of development, if it could be called criticism of development. They are no longer so rabid or one-eyed in their view of conservation for conservation's sake. Some years ago, I referred to so-called conservationists. I used that term to describe the sort of people who call themselves conservationists but then proceed to throw away litter such as drink cans and lunch wrappers. They cannot understand that, if you talk about conservation, you have to behave as though you really believe what you are saying. If those people were true conservationists, they would be walking around stark naked or sitting under a tree contemplating their navels. It is farming which produces the food they

eat and the cotton crop which is used to manufacture their clothes. It is mining which produces the synthetics, cars and vehicles which they use, and so on. The very lives of conservationists depend upon the clearing of land to grow food, and mining to provide goods. There has to be a balance between development and conservation.

The honourable minister said that, in the past 11 years, \$257m has been allocated to the Conservation Commission, increasing from just over \$10m in 1977-78 to about \$50m in the current year, the implication being that the main thrust of the government's budgetary considerations had been towards conservation. That is not true, Mr Speaker. I was not able to obtain all the figures but, if I could refer to education expenditure, the figure was \$139m in 1984 and it is \$260m in the 1989-90 budget. In those few years, the amount spent on education has doubled. That makes an interesting comparison with the amount spent on conservation issues.

No government, these days, can afford to lock up land or to encourage the locking up of land from productive use. Yesterday during question time, I asked the Minister for Lands and Housing a question. I was pleased with the promptitude of his reply. He seems to answer questions more quickly than he answers letters. Following my own inquiries 2 weeks ago with relevant officers in 2 government departments, I was unable to obtain any information about the land clearing at Douglas Station. Whilst I am aware that the current owner of that station has a record of running a pretty tight ship and of being aware of good farming and pastoral practices, nevertheless a very large area is to be cleared for farming. I believe that we have to be extra careful about the way such large areas of land are treated.

The honourable minister did not make mention of the fact that, when large areas of Tipperary Station were first cleared in the mid 1960s, there were big problems with soil degradation. I hope that these problems are not repeated on Douglas Station. As I said, given the record of the current owner in terms of the care of the land under his control, I believe that those old days will not be repeated.

Mr Reed: Have you had a good look at what he has done?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I praised him. I have not knocked him. I have not received an invitation yet.

Mr Speaker, members of the opposition made much of the numbers of the Gouldian finch, the implication being that that rotten activity of mining was responsible for the decreasing numbers. Anybody who knows anything about aviary and bird matters knows that it is not mining which brought about the decrease in numbers of the Gouldian finch but an air sac infection of the finches. I believe that the mining company at Pine Creek, Billiton Gold, and the Conservation Commission are to be applauded for their work in attempting to identify the reasons for this infection of the Gouldian finch and their efforts to breed clean stock.

That brings me to one of my hobbyhorses, something which I have been advocating for a long time. I believe that it should be possible to harvest flora and fauna from the wild, particularly fauna, and husband them in an intensive farming situation. In the case of birds, of course, it would be an aviary situation. There will always come a time when disease breaks out in natural populations, decreasing their numbers. If there are healthy populations in different locations around the country, those can be used to increase the numbers in the wild again. I am sure that many people would be

willing to work with the Conservation Commission in that regard. I am not an authority on caged birds so it is possible that people are already doing that. If that is the case, good luck to them and to the Conservation Commission.

I was a bit taken aback by a statement made by the minister when he was talking about the management of the Territory's crocodile population. He said: 'With the introduction of protection for the salt-water crocodile in 1971, crocodile numbers gradually increased from a dangerously low level to numbers that are believed to be approaching those that existed prior to European settlement of the Territory'. Mr Speaker, I do not know about you but I cannot remember as far back as prior to 1829, so I would like to know where the honourable minister got his figures. I simply make that point in passing.

The honourable minister talked about the Conservation Commission management program in relation to magpie geese. I have been personally interested in this matter for a number of years and have offered to work with the Conservation Commission. Some working arrangements will be arrived at next year. I am looking forward to seeing what I can do for the husbandry of magpie geese in a farm situation and, perhaps, to contributing something to the sum of knowledge that is slowly being gained about this native species.

The honourable minister intends to release the discussion paper for public input. I would like to think that neither he nor the Conservation Commission will become bogged down in shuffling a mass of paperwork backwards and forwards because of this process. I am not saying that the public should be denied input to this report, but what will happen when they comment on it and make criticisms of it? Will these be accepted by the minister? Will he report back to the Assembly? He has not said exactly what he will do when the public makes input to the report. Will he accept the comments or is this simply an exercise in becoming greener?

The honourable minister talked about the coastal management policy. He spoke about physical and aesthetic deterioration and the maximisation of public access to coastal recreation opportunities. He indicated that major development proposals should be subject to environmental assessment. In respect of the maximisation of public access to coastal recreational opportunities, I would like to think that that covers land that is held by black people as well as white people. When he talks about major development proposals needing environmental assessment, I think he is talking about something that is already in place. Any major development has to have a PER or an EIS. A major development on the coastal fringe is no different from any other major development proposal.

The honourable minister went on to speak about the government pursuing the issue of land care for some years, and I believe that it has done so. He talked about the geographic information system which records and collates all information regarding land systems. I believe that this was a first for Australia. In many ways, the Northern Territory government and the Northern Territory is fortunate in that, because of our smaller population and less sophisticated approach to issues, we are on the ground floor of many innovative procedures. I believe that, with our information system on land matters, we are ahead of the states.

I would like to think that, with this information at their fingertips, the Minister for Conservation and the Minister for Lands and Housing would give consideration to an idea that has been put forward - not by me although I endorse it - in relation to the subdividing of pastoral leases. With



increasing numbers of people wanting to go on the land, there will soon be a shortage of land. Subdivisions will have to be considered to put more people on the land.

The honourable minister said that the government has decided to formulate a policy on recycling that would apply to all areas of government. I hope this will not be, as one honourable member put it, recycling for recycling's sake. Any recycling development that is proposed must have an end-use for the product. That is most important. The end-use for the product of recycling has to tie in with very good economics; otherwise, the process is completely wasted and the wastage applies not only to the product recycled but to our efforts. However, I will applaud the government if it can do something. This ties in with what I said last Thursday regarding the formation of a total recycling advisory committee. I can see it working closely with the government on this matter.

There are many fine phrases in the minister's statement which do not mean much. Only time will tell whether he has put his money where his mouth is. I think that the general population, in the Northern Territory and elsewhere, is very conservation minded. People want to have a direction, especially from government, as to how they can make their part of the world as good for their children to live in as it has been for them. I support the honourable minister's statement with the proviso that I hope that this is only the beginning of the greening of the CLP. I am not telling my grandmother how to suck eggs but, obviously, the government has seen the light a little. I hope that we will see many beneficial results from the discussion document which the honourable minister has presented today.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, I think the major product of the whole debate on the environment ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is hot air.

Mr PALMER: Hot air certainly, but also a plethora of cliches, platitudes and buzz phrases. The speech of the member for Wanguri was a tirade of cliches, platitudes and buzz phrases. There was no substance or fact. Unfortunately, the whole debate is sprinkled with issues which tend to highlight the hypocrisy of the situation.

To commence, I will refer to the Wanguri by-election where, for the first time in the Territory's history, we had a Green Independent candidate. I thought that candidate would be a responsible person with a true feeling and concern for the environment. I spent some time at the Wanguri school manning the polling booth and the good lady was present with her young baby. Would you believe, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the baby was clad in disposable nappies? Disposable nappies are the greatest problem facing waste disposal utilities in the United States today. In the Northern Territory, the Green Independent candidate has her baby clad in disposable nappies which can be thrown away and forgotten about. The environment will look after them.

If you drive out on the Arnhem Highway towards Kakadu, Mr Deputy Speaker, you will come to 2 large pillars announcing your arrival in Kakadu National Park. I have taken that trip a few times and, as I drive past those pillars, I do not notice much difference in the country contained within Kakadu National Park to the country which lies immediately adjacent to it. I was about to say 'the conservationists', but I should not use that term in describing the people I am talking about. The ratbag greenies, along with some members of the federal government, would have us believe that the country

on the eastern side of that line is pristine World Heritage country which should not be opened up to mining or any type of development. However, if you take one step to the west, you are in country which is good for nothing but a motorised cavalry training area and artillery range. That is immediately adjacent, with no change in the country. We have World Heritage country and a military training area which will be run over by tanks and motorised vehicles of all descriptions, squashing every goanna and frill-necked lizard in sight, and discharging artillery shells all around.

The member for Wanguri is now proposing that Leanyer Swamp be turned into a lake to somehow alleviate the problems with salt-marsh mosquitoes. Doesn't the salt-marsh mosquito, *Aedes vigilax*, have the right to survive? Aren't we humans intruding on the environment of the salt-marsh mosquito? Are we going to drive this humble insect, one of God's creatures, into extinction? Whilst building the lake, we will probably affect the breeding habitat of the little silver scat, a number of species of prawns, barramundi and all manner of marine creatures. We will destroy some mangroves and probably a few humans will get blown up by the 500 lb bombs which remain buried there. The salt-marsh mosquito can travel up to 200 km. Destroying merely a small part of its environment will in no way diminish the effect of swarm mosquitoes on the northern suburbs. *Aedes vigilax* will come in from as far as Cape Hotham, or wherever it needs to come from to get a feed.

Mr Smith: Rubbish! 1.5 km.

Mr PALMER: Oh, Mr Deputy Speaker, 1.5 km! It is 1.6 km that seems to be the magic distance. Little boys walking to school fall dead at that distance, and apparently mosquitoes also hit the barrier and fall dead at that distance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, they have collected samples of *Aedes vigilax* in Katherine, hundreds of kilometres from the nearest salt marsh.

Mr Coulter: They are probably on the back of a Gouldian finch.

Mr PALMER: Yes.

Debate on environmental issues is also riddled with confusion about what will happen as a result of the Greenhouse Effect. I have attempted to become familiar with the problems posed by the Greenhouse Effect. One issue, of course, is the warming of oceans and the subsequent rise in sea levels. For some 18 000 years, the oceans have been rising at rates of between 1.5 mm and 10 mm per annum. Some scientists are telling us that the seas will rise by anything up to 3.5 m by the year 2100. However, the best current estimates now predict a rise of around 30 mm by the year 2035. There is also a body of opinion which states that the polar icecaps may well expand rather than melt due to the warming of the atmosphere. That view predicts that the few extra degrees of atmospheric warmth will result in increased snowfall in the arctic regions, expanding the polar icecaps and perhaps lowering sea levels. I am not saying that that is fact. All I am saying is that that is a body of opinion.

There are also the effects of ozone. We are told that there is a depletion of the ozone layer and that we will die as a result of increased levels of ultraviolet light reaching the surface of the earth. In addition, ozone is a greenhouse gas. There are very real problems in the northern hemisphere with the amount of ozone in the lower levels. President Bush is trying to come to terms with proper and relevant legislation so that he can deal with ozone.

For those members opposite who do not know, ozone is created by a reaction between complex hydrocarbons and light. Those complex hydrocarbons, especially from automobile emissions, and light produce a reaction which results in ozone, a gas which makes a major contribution to the Greenhouse Effect. But, also ...

Mr Ede: What is its chemical formula?

Mr PALMER: If the honourable member opposite, with wax in his ears, will take time out to listen, I will go through it again.

Complex hydrocarbons, exposed to light, break down. One of the resultant gases is ozone,  $O_3$ , which remains in the lower atmosphere and contributes to the Greenhouse Effect. Now, however, a couple of German scientists are telling us that that is not all that bad, because it helps to absorb ultraviolet light coming in, whether it be in the higher levels of the atmosphere or the lower levels of the atmosphere. There is great confusion surrounding the effects of ozone.

Mr Bailey: But there is major change in the world's atmosphere.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will remind members that comments should be made through the Chair.

Mr PALMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, probably the greatest casualty in the whole debate is the truth. We heard the honourable members opposite refer to both nuclear and toxic wastes. If we are to live with the standard of civilisation which we enjoy today, we must accept, first, that there will be some amounts of toxic waste. It is time that Australia, and the rest of the industrialised world, faced up to the problem. It is not much use storing that waste in 44-gallon drums in non-secure premises in cities. We have to get rid of that waste. The problem does not just go away if we deny its existence. Those wastes are there.

One of the greatest factors contributing to the pollution problems of Sydney is people pouring toxic waste down the drain. They have no other way to get rid of it. They have no alternative but to pour it down the drain. Some caring individuals proposed a high-level toxic waste incinerator. The only way to break down some complex chemicals into their component atoms is through high-temperature incineration. But no, we cannot have such a facility in the Northern Territory. We do not participate in this industrialised society. We cannot have it in Western Australia, which is not part of it either. South Australia is certainly not part of the industrialised world. It always has to be somewhere else. We have to recognise that our responsibility extends to getting rid of waste. If it happens that the Northern Territory, outback Western Australia, western Queensland, New South Wales or South Australia is the best place for a toxic waste incinerator, so be it. Let us not, however, deny that such a facility is required. The Leader of the Opposition ...

Mr Smith: Where do you think it should be?

Mr PALMER: I do not know, but it has to be somewhere.

Mr Deputy Speaker, people deny the facts of nuclear waste. Since the inception of the nuclear power industry, not one ounce of high-level nuclear waste has been disposed of. All of the waste from the coal-fired power generating industry has been disposed of, mostly into the atmosphere, in the

form of CO<sub>2</sub>, sulphur dioxide, and any amount of other toxic gases, including radon daughters. Radioactive emissions from a 1000 MW coal-fired power station are greater than those from 1000 MW nuclear-powered power stations. However, we simply refuse to deal with the few cubic meters of high-level toxic waste from nuclear power stations. When that waste is cool enough, it is stored in 44-gallon drums. It is piled up in tanks, but it has not been disposed of. The greatest contributory factor to the Greenhouse Effect is, in fact, coal-fired power stations. One of the answers, much to the annoyance of many members on the opposite side, is nuclear energy. There can be no denying the facts. If we are to do anything constructive, real and marked about the Greenhouse Effect, the whole world will have to turn to alternative forms of energy, and the only practical alternative form of energy is nuclear.

There is potential for solar energy, but to power the state of Texas in the United States by using high-yield photo-voltaic cells - and I am talking about things which operate at about 14% efficiency - it would be necessary to cover half the continental area of the United States with cells and to dig up all of the continental area of the United States to make the cells. Supplying Sydney's power needs with hydro-electricity would require the construction of a dam from Rockhampton to Port Hedland, about 100 km out to sea, just to get enough tidal movement to produce that power. Those sums are easily done.

I am afraid that this debate will not yield much at all in the way of constructive criticism or constructive advice to the Northern Territory government. Once again, we will have to go it alone. Once again, we will have to be the real conservationists, as we have always been. The platitudes, cliches and buzz phrases of the opposition will do nothing toward furthering the debate on the environment or toward furthering the conservation of the environment. It is only through the actions of this government, and the minister, that anything will ever be done.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to contribute to this verbose debate, and I will be as brief as possible. I think it behoves me to say that the minister's proposition in addressing the issue is most appropriate. Perhaps, the alacrity with which he has approached it has caused a fair amount of the division that we have on the floor today. The discussion document presented by the minister is fairly long and goes to some pains to point out the government's successes in the areas of conservation. It outlines some of the government's attitudes, and it also begs some of the very important questions that have to be addressed. In terms of relevance to the community, the average Territorian, the document has very little to offer at all. I do not wish to be derogatory when I say that, because it is impossible to canvass all the conservation issues that confront us in a document such as this and, perhaps, those issues should have been set out in stages.

What Territorians are interested in, and what they are talking about today as matters of conservation or environmental improvement that are important to them, have nothing to do with the contents of the minister's discussion document. That document was written by people who are very interested in what they are doing and who do it very well. I do not think anybody would want to take that away from them. However, the times have moved to a point at which the issues which the community is interested in have not been addressed. I would like to raise some of those issues today.

Regrettably, the government was unable to send a representative to the meeting on environmental, recycling and disposal issues held at the Travelodge some weeks ago. I would like to reiterate that that was unfortunate, because that cross-section of people would have made it pretty clear to the

government, without any emotion at all, that the community has some expectations in the conservation and environmental area that it wants to see fulfilled. They are not big deal; they are not concerns about \$6m parks and magnificent conservation areas. Those people are not talking about whether or not we should mine, have large conservation zones, or have soil conservation programs from one end of the Territory to the other. They are interested in the day-to-day things that are very important to them, and to which they can contribute as individuals in terms of a conservation plan, program or environmental enhancement order.

I will touch briefly on the issue of recycling, because the minister gave a very clear indication in question time this morning of his attitude to the government's involvement in recycling. That attitude seemed to be that the government would pursue recycling if it could be demonstrated to produce an end product which would have economic value in the marketplace. In his statement, the minister went on to say: 'However, recycling programs are already in place'. If the minister had been at the meeting held at the Travelodge, he would have come away with an entirely different view about the success of recycling programs for waste in the Northern Territory. In fact, it was demonstrated on probably a dozen different occasions by people in the room that night, that recycling opportunities exist and are being passed over for various reasons, one of which is money. But it would be very hard to argue, with any concrete evidence at all, that recycling programs are in place and are working well.

I would invite the minister to start taking an interest in the forum that has been set up on recycling. People at the meeting demonstrated that, if you wish to sit down and list 100 different products that are currently being dumped into ...

Mr Hatton: Do you know Barbara Singer?

Mr TUXWORTH: I know Barbara Singer quite well, to pick up the interjection, which has very little relevance to the issue being discussed.

Mr Speaker, it is possible to list 100 items which people might not like to have dumped in rubbish tips for environmental or economic reasons. There is an enormous capacity for local government authorities and industries throughout the Territory to set those items aside, to keep them out of the tips and to recycle them in some other way. The opportunities are enormous. Until now, such opportunities have been pursued only if there was seen to be a value for the product at the end of the day. The reality is that, if we wish to practice conservation and environmental management of our waste, it will cost some dollars. The minister said this morning - and I understand why he feels this way - that if there are some dollars to be gained, recycling should take place and, if there are no dollars to be gained, it will just have to wait for another day.

Mr Hatton: Or alternative uses.

Mr TUXWORTH: The minister's interjection really confirms what I am saying and it defies logic.

In his statement, the minister said that \$235m had been spent over a period of years on conservation in the Northern Territory. It was not all spent with a view to obtaining a dollar return. It was spent with a view to making the environment better and providing opportunities for people to enjoy the environment and to benefit from improvements to the environment. That

same argument can be extended to the issue of waste disposal. It will cost money to improve our system of handling waste disposal and the garbage that we throw away, including the batteries, tyres, waste oils and all the other substances which are just tipped out on the dumps in various communities.

If the government is sincere about conservation and improving environmental control of our garbage disposal system, then it has to admit that it will cost money. I am not saying the government should run out and allocate large amounts of money for that purpose next year or whatever. I am advocating that a program should be set in place so that, over a period of 10 years, the whole community is able to work to eliminate the disposal of certain products via the garbage system. If the minister had been able to attend the meeting at the Travelodge, he would have heard a very interesting discourse from George Brown on some of the ways that this matter could be dealt with. I think it is a credit to some people that they have actually advanced their thinking so far.

Whilst the minister's statement deals mainly with conservation, it contains a thread on environmental improvement and control. That is most important to Territorians in the community who are trying to improve their environment. The Chief Minister advanced a proposition about a year ago that \$4m to \$6m be spent on upgrading Darwin's image and making it a tropical mecca. Nobody argued with that, Mr Speaker. Other communities are agreeing that it ought to happen and that it ought to happen elsewhere as well. Action does not have to be instantaneous but, if a program can be established which both sides of the parliament and all parties can agree upon, everyone will know what they are working towards. I see nothing in the statement which addresses that particular issue and I would have thought that, in terms of what people in the community want, it is a very important issue for the government to address.

The use of chemicals and pesticides has been reflected upon today in different ways. The average member of the community has a genuine concern about the availability, use, storage and disposal of those substances and, again, there needs to be an overall approach. As I travel around in the community, I am finding that people are increasingly interested in how gas can be used in stationary motors and vehicle engines in the Northern Territory. The use of gas in motor vehicle engines leads to savings of between 15% and 20%, if people can buy it at the right price, which most can. More importantly, there is a terrific advantage for the Territory in going down that road. It takes time. It needs a plan and a program for people to latch on to and adapt to. Such a plan might not be a multi-million dollar bonanza for the government. It may not cost the government anything, but it is certainly something which the average Territorian would like to be part of.

I turn now to the question of electricity consumption in relation to energy conservation. We no longer have the highest electricity rates in Australia. I think that they are the second highest.

A member: Third.

Mr TUXWORTH: They may be the third highest. Bracket creep has overtaken them.

Mr Hatton: We have frozen the price since you last increased it.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I pick up the interjection from the honourable member. The only price that the government has not increased in the last

3 years is that of electricity. Everything else has received an absolute flogging. If members opposite do not believe that, they should walk down the street and talk to some of the people who are paying the bills. What a hide, Mr Speaker! You would not believe that members of the government would be game to open their mouths.

The dollars that have been spent on the parks and conservation areas of the Northern Territory are not denied. They are appreciated by the community. There is also a growing concern and belief that some of the dollars should now be directed into other areas of conservation and the environment. I have already pointed out that people are speaking quite openly about recycling and other issues.

The minister did not comment on the issue of container deposits. He might like to consider how he will handle that issue in the days to come because it is certainly gaining a higher profile in the community. People are talking about it more and more. When one sees the litter that is being strewn around the place, one can understand why.

In a debate during the last sittings, I suggested to the minister that what is needed is a conservation and environment policy which has the support of both sides of the House and the community generally, in the sense that it can be adopted over 10 or 15 years if necessary. We should not lose sight of the fact that the great gains made by the Keep Australia Beautiful Council and Territory Tidy Towns have really been made over a long period of time by winning the support of the community. If we can develop a conservation and environment policy which has the support of both sides of the House, and which is not rendered impotent by political division and argument over priorities, it will make great progress in the community.

The reality is that it does not matter what the minister writes or whether we support it or not. What matters is whether people in the community say: 'That is a damn good thing and we ought to get in and be part of it'. That will be the yardstick of the success of any conservation policy which is adopted by anybody in this House. I say to the minister again that, if he is prepared to come at conservation policy from that angle, he will find that there will be widespread support from the members of this House. I have no doubt about that.

Mr Speaker, having made those comments, I would like to assure the minister that his paper has considerable merit. It has inadequacies, and that is quite understandable. Everything that relates to conservation cannot be covered in 15 or 20 pages. There is a desperate need for the sights to be lowered and for issues which are important to the average Territorian to be addressed, so that they do not believe that the whole thing is a collection of words to generate warm fuzzy feelings but which has no affect on the state of the environment in the future or, in fact, on conservation as a whole.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the minister's statement. I think that its contents are very sound. The minister went to great lengths to tell us about the program of the Conservation Commission and the government in future years and to outline the scope of activities to date.

Many of the speakers have not mentioned the fact that the minister's statement was accompanied by an excellent bound document entitled 'On Balance - Towards a Conservation Strategy for the Northern Territory'.

Mr Hatton: I gave them a copy yesterday.

Mr SETTER: Perhaps a copy was given to them yesterday but it has not been mentioned today.

Mr Hatton: Probably they have not read it.

Mr SETTER: No, probably they have not read it.

Mr Speaker, I was really hopeful that the opposition would choose to support the concept of the minister's statement which was put forward in a genuine desire to outline a conservation strategy for the Northern Territory and, of course, to seek bipartisan support for that. It is a fairly straightforward statement. There is nothing political about it. It is a genuine attempt to seek bipartisan support. But did the government receive that support? No, Mr Speaker. Once again, we saw members of the opposition take the opportunity to develop their political agenda by scoring a few cheap political points, taking advantage of this genuine attempt by the minister to come to some joint approach on this issue. They just were not capable of that, Mr Speaker, and I will explain why that is the case.

It is because the Australian Labor Party nationally and, indeed, here in the Northern Territory, falsely believes that it has a mortgage on environmental matters and that concern for such matters is its province alone. Mr Speaker, that is just not true. The ALP has gone out of its way, particularly at a federal level, to fund and foster environmental groups, such as the environment centres which adorn various cities around this country, the Australian Conservation Foundation, and a multitude of other similar organisations. By means of increased funding, the ALP has manipulated those organisations, perhaps indirectly. They are staffed by left-wing greenies who seem to be anti-everything. They are not really conservationists. In reality, they are preservationists who want to preserve everything at all costs. They have no concept at all of controlled development or blending development with care for the environment. The federal ALP set its long-term political agenda some 6 or 8 years ago and I must admit that it has had some success.

We saw the situation at the Wanguri by-election where, almost overnight, a Green Independent candidate picked up over 16% of the vote. That person was virtually unheard of when the election was called. Recently, we witnessed the spectacle of the Prime Minister travelling down to the junction of the Darling and the Murrumbidgee Rivers to present the world's greatest environmental statement. Complete with an entourage of media people, the Prime Minister stood under a eucalyptus tree surrounded by a throng of people, including schoolchildren, and presented his statement. What a con! He really did not deceive too many people.

The Prime Minister said that we would plant a billion trees. I have been talking to organisations such as Greening Australia and asking them where I can get some trees. They tell me that they have not seen any money yet. At the moment, they are talking about planting seeds so they can germinate seedlings. What the Prime Minister failed to say in this wonderful environmental statement was that he would provide everybody with a seed to plant. Perhaps the seeds will grow and in time we will have our billion trees. When he says that we are going to plant a billion trees, people want to see seedlings or even larger trees that have a chance of survival. Even the member for Wanguri knows that, if you plant masses of seedlings in this type of environment, the chance of survival is about 10%. That is a reality. More advanced specimens are needed that have a much greater chance of survival than seedlings. It is a con.



We have also seen how international treaties have been used as a political weapon in this country over the last 10 or 15 years. We heard about the listing of various areas as World Heritage areas. That has been used by the current ALP federal government to service its own political agenda. We know what happened in regard to the Franklin River. We know what happened in regard to the north Queensland rainforest. We know what happened in regard to the woodchip industry.

Mr Bailey: So we should chop them down.

Mr SETTER: Nobody is saying that at all. I am pointing out how world treaties have been used by this current federal government for its own political agenda.

In recent times, we have had Coronation Hill. I can tell honourable members that Senator Richardson did not have it all his own way in the federal Cabinet or the federal caucus. The other day, Minister Kerin was highly critical of the way in which the decision to defer endorsement of mining at Coronation Hill was rushed through Cabinet when he and a number of his colleagues were overseas. He was highly critical and was pulled into line by the Prime Minister.

We heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about the message of Wanguri. He told us how the voters had endorsed the ALP and had given a real message to the CLP. The fact is that the ALP's percentage of the vote in Wanguri increased by 1%. The member for Wanguri won on the second preferences of the Green Independent candidate.

Mr Bailey: Do you want to compare your first preferences with mine?

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, he won because of the second preferences of the Green Independent candidate, not a massive swing to the ALP.

Let's have a look at the NT News of 21 August 1989. The Leader of the Opposition said that it was not in the Labor Party's interest to invite the Green Independent candidate, Mrs Debra Beattie-Burnett, to join the Australian Labor Party.

Mr Smith: That's right.

Mr SETTER: He said: 'Mrs Beattie-Burnett and other green candidates are much more valuable as independents'. The Australian Labor Party wanted to manipulate those green candidates in the hope of gaining those second preferences. That is what it is all about.

Mr Ede: You wouldn't do that with the Nationals.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, what happened was that Mrs Debra Beattie-Burnett was not very happy about the comments of the Leader of the Opposition. She replied a couple of days later, on 22 August 1989. I quote: "In the post-election gloating over results, Mr Smith has presupposed that green candidates will always give their preferences to Labor", an angry Mrs Beattie-Burnett said today. "I do not see myself as valuable to Mr Smith under any circumstances. This bespeaks his ignorance and his lack of understanding of what it means to be an independent", Mrs Beattie-Burnett added'.

I think that the Leader of the Opposition has misjudged the Independent Green candidate and, indeed, other green candidates who will doubtless stand in the next Northern Territory election. They have woken up to the little ploy of these people opposite. I doubt very much whether they will fall into the same trap next time, nor will the voters. They saw what happened. We had this pseudo-Labor Party candidate, the member for Wanguri ...

Mr Bailey: I am a paid-up member.

Mr SETTER: ... who, in my opinion, was elected by default. He rambled on in this debate and actually gave 2 speeches. One was prepared for him by another person.

Mr Bailey: Get your facts right.

Mr SETTER: It was quite obvious. Why don't you admit it?

When he completed his written speech and started to ad lib, I thought it was more interesting because he put his foot in it even further. He spoke about the clearing of land on Douglas Station and how the burning of all that timber would pollute the atmosphere. In Australia, we all get warm about environmental issues and implement policies to preserve our environment. That is quite appropriate and I support it, but the reality is that, in spite of our efforts and goodwill, it will make almost no difference at all to the global situation.

Mr Bailey: How do you expect third world countries to do it if we are not prepared to do it?

Mr SETTER: I totally support what was in that. I think we should, and I think that the honourable member needs to understand that, in terms of the global environment situation, it will make almost no difference. I think we should continue down the path which we have taken. I think it is admirable and we have to do it but I also think we should go over and talk to some of these third world people, because the fact is that the countries whose populations total billions are mostly in our region. I am talking about the Indian subcontinent, Asia and South-east Asia. People in this region are chopping down trees as if they are going out of fashion. They are using them for fuel because they have no alternative fuel source - none whatsoever.

What we need to be doing as a country is attending world environmental forums to try to convince these third world countries that there is an alternative. I know it will be difficult, particularly when there is no alternative fuel source apart from, perhaps, cow dung. I have seen that used in India. People collect cow dung. They knock it into little patties and stick it up on the wall to dry, after which they burn it as a fuel in the little cast-iron stoves which they use where they live and sleep on the pavements. Hundreds of thousand of people sleep on the pavement every night in India, and that happens to be a fact. But in other countries, people chop down trees because they have no alternative fuel source, and I think that is very sad.

But the situation is even worse, and this has not been mentioned by the federal Labor government although it has been referred to by members of this House. In this country, and in most other developed western countries, we are mining and extracting fossil fuels as if they were going out of fashion. Those products are being exported to Japan and Europe and other places where they are burned in smelters, coal-fired power stations and so forth, with

horrendous effects on the environment. In Europe, it is reported that 40% of the Black Forest in Germany is dying because of the atmospheric pollution brought about by the burning of such fossil fuels in power stations and motor cars. I know that, a few years ago, the United Kingdom government undertook to spend \$400m on a program to extract the sulphur from the fumes being spewed forth by power stations, sulphur which was being carried across the North Sea by wind and was killing the forests in Norway and Sweden. That is still going on today. Mr Speaker, if you go to Europe, you will find that you cannot see further than from here to McMinn Street, or from here to Daly Street, because the air pollution is so thick.

That is why we need to do something about the environment. That is why I support the minister's statement. We have to change our ways in this country and in every other country of the world, including developed western countries and third world countries which I emphasise because, in the main, they have no environmental protection whatsoever. Not only are they cutting down all their trees for fuel but they are releasing all sorts of polluting materials into their river systems, which empty into the oceans. It is horrendous. As I said before, we might feel all warm about what we are doing, and I support what we are attempting to do, but the reality is that we do not have much effect on the situation.

What I find incompatible is the fact that, on one hand, we find the Labor Party opposing what is happening in those third world countries - the deforestation and so on - whilst, on the other, it also opposes uranium mining, and it does this in spite of the fact that the use of uranium as a fuel offers probably the only economical way known to man of solving the problems. If uranium were used to generate electricity throughout the world, we could solve the problem in a fairly short space of time, with oil and diesel continuing to be used only for motor vehicles.

Mr Speaker, I certainly support the minister's statement. I think it is a very worthwhile statement, but the important thing to note is that there is nothing new, as indicated by the member for MacDonnell, in our environmental policy. We have been doing this for years. The CLP government has a record second to none in this country with respect to environmental protection. We have an excellent Conservation Commission which is also second to none, and I support the statement.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I do not know that there is much to be added to the comments that have been made already on the minister's statement, therefore, my comments will tend to be a reflection upon what has been said in this House. I think it has become increasingly obvious, Mr Speaker, to yourself and indeed probably to any objective observer in this House that the most endangered member of a species in the Northern Territory is the new green Minister for Conservation. Listening to the support that he received from his colleagues, one can only speculate about his continued existence.

The Minister for Mines and Energy made no bones about it. Ayers Rock was a great example of erosion, the Gouldian finch could perhaps be more easily protected in cages, and the bilby should continue to flourish in captivity. That illustrated the degree of support which the Minister for Conservation has so far received from his ministerial colleagues. I doubt that his continuing as part of the landscape of the Northern Territory is in any way guaranteed.

It was interesting to listen to honourable members opposite and to hear some of the comments emanating from the new, green CLP. The member for Karama seems to think that ultraviolet is the last act playing on the stage at the

Maranga Hotel - by ozone out of soul, that is her story. Poor old ultraviolet. That was the member for Karama's contribution. Then we had the member for that postage stamp called Jingili, who believes that we have no role to play because we can play no great part. The dung burners of India are far more responsible for the plight that we all face than anybody in this House can ever be.

The greening of the CLP is not going to happen, and I do not care whether or not it is explained to the honourable minister by the member for Karama, who is more concerned about mosquitoes flying 200 km than he is about the vital conservation concerns that this part of the world faces, or if that is left to the pro-erosion Minister for Mines and Energy. I really do not care who contributes to the minister's disillusionment, the fact is that his disillusion must be total. His statement has proven the policy to be the farce that it always was, simply because, as far as his party is concerned, it is pie in the sky. Members of the government do not understand the issues and, therefore, they cannot address them.

The issues are political, as I have said in this House time and time again, and I do not care if the member for Jingili damns the fact that my colleague, the member for Wanguri, despite only a 1% swing, happens to be a member of this House. A fact of life is that that is a reflection of the political mood. The member for Jingili can cry and weep in his bed day after day about the ALP achieving only a 1% swing and still having the temerity to win the seat. He can bleat and weep and cry about that for as long as he likes, but it is still a political fact of life. Until members on the other side of the House understand political realities, until they understand the demands and dictates of their assessors, they are doomed. Everything I have heard from the other side of the House suggests that not only have they not heard but, if they do hear, they do not care. That is the bottom line. They do not care. The minister can go through his greening process, but the fact is that he has been abandoned by his colleagues. He has been damned from their own mouths in this debate. He has been cursed, not by this side of the House, but by his own colleagues. He has been buried by the people who continue to believe that the earth is made only to be raped. That is their fundamental belief. The earth exists for one purpose only, and that is to satisfy their immediate gratification. That is the only reason it exists for these people opposite: to satisfy their immediate gratification. Nothing they have said today can take away from that simple, fundamental reality. That is what they believe, that is how they think and that is how they act, from the Minister for Mines and Energy to the Attorney-General, from the member for Jingili to the member for Karama.

The minister is not damned by anybody on this side of the House. The farce being played out here and which my colleague the member for Wanguri identified as such, has not been perpetrated in any way by members on this side of the House. It has been perpetrated by his own colleagues. They have demonstrated that the minister's statement is a farce. They have demonstrated the joke that the new, green CLP is. I do not have to do anything to add to that, because they continue to do it day after day with every utterance that they make.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, in the debate on the environment, not only in this House but in the newspapers and other media throughout the nation, there is a theme being put forward by some people that development and conservation are directly opposed and incompatible. I believe this to be totally wrong.

Development, which is important to this country and to us as Territorians, has to be sustainable development. Of all the species on this earth, man is the one creature who can work to improve his environment. We need only to consider the situation of this country 200 or 300 years ago. It could have been settled by the Dutch but they looked at it and said: 'It looks too hard and too tough. We will leave it to the Aboriginal people who have been here for a considerable time'. It was a tough environment, and I would say to anybody who is down in the mouth about Australia and its environment: 'Look back 200 years. Look just how tough it really was and look at the huge improvements which have been made and which more and more people in Australia, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, are looking to enjoy. That is good. It is one of the things which sets man apart from all the other animals on this earth.

Sustainable development is very important. Maybe we are starting to wake up and to realise that some wrong practices were adopted by our fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers in the early days. Maybe they cleared far too much of the land, leading to soil salinity problems and so forth. I say again that man is capable, if he has the will, the wealth and the good reasons - which are economic reasons - to keep our soil in a state in which it can be used to create wealth, to grow food and crops, to sustain animals, to produce fibres for clothing and so forth. This is important. To anybody who cares to think about it deeply enough, it is self-evident that development, the production of wealth, and conservation are not incompatible. They go hand in hand.

I take issue strongly, as I have done before, with one Phillip Toyne of the Australian Conservation Foundation, who has said on many occasions that Australians will have to lower their standard of living. I say that, if we lower our standard of living and if our level of sustainable development is reduced, as he would have it, we will not have the wealth to solve the problems which have occurred. One of the good things about today is that people are awake to the fact that things are not good. They are prepared to tackle the problems and they are prepared to put money into that process because they realise that, by doing so, they will sustain the results of the development which has occurred. Without money, it is not possible to do the things which we in this country are lucky enough to be able to do and, increasingly, are gaining the will to do.

It is patently clear that conservation and sustainable development go hand in hand. One has only to look at third world countries to realise that population explosions are causing activities which are abhorrent to us, including the chopping down of trees in the Amazon rainforest, that area of the world which was removing from the atmosphere the carbon dioxide produced through the burning of fossil fuels, and converting it back to oxygen. That should be of grave concern to us. People living in poverty apparently have very little alternative but to do that. It highlights the fact that wealth creation is vitally important. You must have it if you are to be able to afford to conserve the environment, to face up to the problems which have occurred, to put funds into scientific research and, when that research is complete, to put the solutions into practice. Those processes cost a considerable amount of money.

We have heard much today about the word 'green'. It is not so long since that label meant that a person was a bit wet behind the ears. Unfortunately, many of the people who jump on the green bandwagon are a bit wet behind the ears. They are interested in only one thing. They are not interested in the economy. They are interested only in green issues. As I have pointed out, a

good economy is necessary to be able to afford to do the things which the greens want done. The member for Wanguri said that there had to be more money for conservation. Where is it to come from? It will not come from closing things down, shutting things off and reducing development. It will come from development.

I would like to comment on a few other matters that were mentioned. Another emotive issue raised by a member of the opposition related to the Territory becoming what he described as a nuclear waste dump for the world. Words like 'dump', 'waste' and 'nuclear' are emotive and cause concern to a lot of people. That is fine except that, of course, the people are often far from well-informed about the facts of the matter in relation to nuclear waste. It is not something to be handled lightly, but it can be handled well. I believe that we would do a great deal for the world if we became involved in the nuclear recycling process. We have the land. We have places in the Territory where we can take this waste material. The synroc process, an Australian invention, allows the safe disposal of high level radioactive waste. I contrast that approach with the huge amounts of hydrocarbons, gases, and nitric and sulphuric acid which come from coal and carbon fuels, such as petroleum, and are polluting this world of ours.

I really believe that such waste disposal would be a contribution of real size when compared with just going out and planting a few trees, which is not a bad idea in itself. If hundreds and millions of people plant trees in their own environment, they will contribute to the carbon dioxide/oxygen cycle and help to improve the environment for everybody in the process. However, the Territory could make a contribution to the environment on a very large scale by storing nuclear waste products using the synroc process. Although we have a bottleneck in Canberra in terms of that option, I will never resile from supporting it. Of course, it could create considerable wealth for the Territory. That is probably secondary to the fact that we could be taking a dangerous product, which exists in relatively small amounts compared to the millions of tonnes of sulphur dioxide, carbon dioxide and nitric oxides, which produce acids and are devastating the environment. One day, we will have to wake up to the fact that the nuclear system offers a way of reducing that devastation and gives us a chance to make a tremendous contribution to this world of ours.

Kakadu National Park Stage 2 was mentioned. The minister was accused of wanting to get in there and rip up Kakadu Stage 2, just as one imagines the feral buffalo and pigs are damaging the environment. I take great heart, as should every member of this Assembly and every Territorian, at the number of visitors who visit the Ranger mine to see how mining is controlled in a manner of which we should be very proud. We could do the same in Kakadu Stage 2 and, no doubt, it will happen at Coronation Hill, which is something of a burning issue at present. It is pretty clear to me that the mining of Coronation Hill will be delayed for only a year, Mr Speaker. You would appreciate the fact that the federal government is playing politics. If mining had been allowed to go ahead a couple of months ago, when the federal Labor caucus considered the issue, work would be proceeding in the coming year. There would be lots of people out there and there would be lots of jobs for Territorians. Wealth would be being created in the construction phase and people might say: 'This Territory government is not doing too badly. It is creating work and employment and that is a good thing'. By not allowing the mine to proceed for 12 months, the CLP government will be denied any advantage. Labor is playing politics. Nothing is surer.

In respect of recycling, I have often mentioned my view that, in an effort to keep the Territory clean, we should look into container deposit legislation very seriously. Such legislation means that a person who purchases a container pays a deposit which is returned if the container is disposed of in a proper manner. If people do not want to dispose of containers in a proper manner, there will be good economic reasons which will result in other Territorians collecting them. As far as I am concerned, such legislation should not apply to just tin, steel and aluminium cans or glass bottles. I note that, in South Australia, there is deposit legislation which applies to plastic bottles and even Coolibah casks, where the problems are caused not so much by the cardboard container as by the bladder inside, which tends to last for a fairly long time. Not only wine but also juice products are sold in those casks. There is no reason why those containers should not be stamped and be subject to a deposit of a few cents in order to encourage people to dispose of them properly.

I dare say that, had the minister waited for another 12 months to make his statement, there would have been a little more ho-hum. He could not escape being accused of becoming a greenie through a sudden conversion. I do not buy that, Mr Speaker. I do not believe there is a single member of this Assembly who likes to see destruction of our environment or any other type of destruction caused in a willy-nilly and stupid fashion. We would like to see the environment improved. We would like also to be able to use the environment for creating wealth, and that is fair enough. When we go, we would like to pass on to following generations, in good order, the Territory that we have enjoyed.

There is enough evidence in the minister's paper, highlighting things that have happened in the past, to indicate that the government's record is not too bad. However, one should never rest on one's laurels. One must look for ways by which to improve. Above all, the government and the parliament have a role to play in encouraging every citizen of the Territory to think about conservation matters seriously, to debate them sanely and, even in small ways, to act in a manner which will improve the environment in which we live.

As I said, the one thing that we could do, if we wanted to make an important global contribution, is to look very carefully at nuclear waste recycling and disposal using the synroc process. We should be proud of that process. It could be used to make a contribution to the world and also a considerable contribution to the wealth of the Territory and this country. Given our present balance of payments, we badly need that.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I have listened with a great deal of interest to this debate. I did not intend to make a contribution, but I could not help myself after hearing some of the garbage that flowed from the mouths of the Labor Party members opposite. Perhaps the best thing that the Labor Party members opposite could do would be to follow the member for Nhulunbuy to Queensland and so free us from the verbal garbage that we have heard today.

The Labor Party has a clear policy, which has been growing stronger in recent times and is now set in concrete, of spreading innuendo. Its purpose is to suggest to people in the Territory that the government is in some way negligent when it comes to conservation and a range of other issues. It is attempting to have Territorians believe that we are not doing the right thing by this great Territory that we call ours.

There is no doubt at all that the Territory government is very supportive of conservation, but we are not radicals. Perhaps one of the things that best highlights this government is that none of us is a radical. We tread what we believe to be the path that will lead Territorians to a great future. That cannot be done by radicalism and it cannot be done by total conservatism. We do not adhere to either extreme. In respect of welfare policies, we are probably second to none in this country. Quite clearly, in respect of conservation, we are second to none. We do not have the problems that exist in other parts of this country. We will never have them while we have a responsible conservative government.

Members opposite have developed the spreading of innuendo to what I would call a low-life art form. I believe that, over time, they will be condemned. People are becoming sick of the way in which this innuendo is never backed up with facts. The facts quite clearly show that the Northern Territory government is second to none in this country in respect of conservation matters. While the opposition carps, this government performs. Look at its record in relation to conservation. Long before the Commonwealth breezed in and took over Kakadu and Uluru, we looked after those parks. We developed them. In fact, Stage 1 of Kakadu was nominated for World Heritage listing by this government. Is that the sign of a government that is opposed to conservation? Of course it is not.

The controls that we have on mining are second to none in this country. Where were the controls on mining when the Commonwealth government allowed the situation to develop at Rum Jungle? Where were the controls on mining prior to self-government? But look at the controls now. Go to Ranger, go to Groote Eylandt, go to Woodcutters, go to the goldmines at Pine Creek and elsewhere and you will see real conservation at work. There is controlled development and clear conservation. Look at the areas that have been reafforested around Gove and you will see real conservation at work. The land is used and returned to a better state than it was found in. That is how it can be done and will be done under this government.

Look at the research into and breeding of endangered species in this Territory. It is second to none in this country. The bilby is a good case in point. The research of this government, through its Conservation Commission, has put in place a means of re-establishing the bilby throughout its normal habitat. Our crocodile industry is built on conservation and is second to none not only in this country but in the world. We are leading the country in crocodile conservation. I know that many people do not want to conserve crocodiles. However, we have done it and we could not have used them as the basis for an industry without a conservation program set in place. We have done that with the accord of the whole world.

Look at the research done into biological control of imported pests such as mimosa and the cane toad. This government is leading the way in research into those 2 pests. The Conservation Commission is working with communities and with pastoralists to overcome land degradation that was not necessarily brought about by controlled animals but by feral animals such as horses, donkeys and buffalo. The Conservation Commission is helping to restore degraded areas along river banks, on pastoral properties and on Aboriginal communities. The member for Stuart, the opposition spokesman on primary industry, does not believe that the buffalo causes damage. I would suggest that he look at the wetlands and see there the damage that they cause. He should look at the controls that are put in place by the Conservation Commission and at the reclamation work that is being done to ensure that that damage does not continue.



The greenie conservationists and the animal liberationists are ALP supporters by another name. Where will their votes go when it comes to an election? They will go to the ALP because they are ALP supporters by another name. The ALP knows that it cannot get support. It puts out these smokescreens in order to pick up a few extra votes. However, the people concerned cannot agree. The greenie conservationists and the animal liberationists would cut one another's throats if they could. When the conservationists advocate shooting the horses, donkeys and buffalo, the animal liberationists say: 'Do not shoot them. Shoot me first'. I wish we could. The fact that those 2 groups are supporters of the Labor Party will come to light at the next election. We know that they will not support us because they are Labor Party supporters by another name.

It was mentioned today that there is large-scale land clearing being carried out at places like Tipperary and Douglas Stations. It is being carried out under the strict control of the Conservation Commission. The owner of that land is a conservationist himself. He believes strongly in conservation and is making sure that his land will not be degraded to the point where it is no longer of any value to him. That land will be cleared under the continuing control of this government, through the Conservation Commission and the Department of Lands and Housing, and it will become far more productive than it has been. Another speaker has explained that we cannot close everything down and rely on conservation to support us. Conservation as such cannot support a nation. Development will support the nation. Conservation and development can and will be balanced.

Pastoralists are deeply concerned about conservation. After all, land is their life. As a consequence, pastoralists have formed a Victoria River conservation group. They have joined with the conservation groups in Alice Springs and taken a very active role. They work very closely with the Conservation Commission and the Department of Lands and Housing. Where degradation has occurred in the past, often as a result of the feral animal numbers which the liberationists would have us retain, pastoralists have banded together to ensure that those areas are improved and that their land is no longer degraded.

The matter of container deposit legislation was raised again today. I can only reiterate that, when this matter came before the Assembly in 1982, it was decided that container deposit legislation was not suitable for the Northern Territory, where there are vast areas and long distances to carry empty containers and, particularly in the more remote places, often no ability to regain the initial deposit paid. Quite clearly, the policies that have been put in place by this government, through the Keep Australia Beautiful Council and Territory Tidy Towns, have been just as effective as container deposit legislation in South Australia.

For 100 km around at least this town and, I am sure, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek, there are people out every day picking up containers and bringing them in for the money they can obtain in return. Those areas are kept quite clean. But, outside those areas, even if there were a 10¢ or 20¢ container deposit, there is no way that people would be bothered bringing them back. Even if they were able to leave those containers in stacking places out in the scrub, what condition would they be in when the time came to pick them up?

We are doing just as good a job as South Australia and, as I have said before, in travelling between here and Adelaide, one sees no difference in terms of the tidiness of the highways to the south and north of the border.

We are just as clean. How do you go about putting a deposit on a plastic bag or on a wine cask container? How do you put deposits on those items? They form the greatest part of visual pollution that we have in the Territory. Cans and bottles are not quite so bad although they are still a problem. In situations where it is financially viable, they are collected and money is passed to those who put in the effort. Travelling from Batchelor to Darwin and back, as I do on a daily basis, I see people out there picking up those containers during the week. I know that some families in the Batchelor area do it for a living and they do reasonably well out of it.

There is no value at all in the Territory government looking deeply at container deposit legislation at this time. We deal with the problem quite effectively now. I was pleased to be able to be involved in the handing out of prizes for the Territory Tidy Towns Competition last week. It was a great success again, as it will continue to be successful in the future. It will continue to have the support of this government and will continue to do as effective a job in keeping the Territory tidy as would deposit legislation.

Mr Speaker, I strongly support the statement of the Minister for Conservation. He has provided a balanced view, one that will never be matched by a Labor Party, a conservation party, a green party, or an animal liberationist party. Whatever you like to call them, they are all the same people. This statement will never be matched by them. They get up and they carp. They spread innuendo, because they know that some of it eventually sticks. They love to spread stories. They know that some will catch hold and that people will say that this government must have some problems with conservation, because the ALP says so so often and there has to be fire where there is smoke. But we know that it is lies.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I want to cover a few points today in relation to this statement. I am prompted to take part in the debate if for no other reason than that opposition members completely failed to put forward any notion of what they would do if they were fortunate enough to gain government. I think that that is what the people of the Northern Territory would have wanted to hear from them today. Members opposite, particularly the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow spokesman for conservation, the member for Wanguri, failed to address the real crux of this debate, the real issues. Most importantly, they failed to put their point of view and say what they would do if they were in government.

The member for Barkly seemed to argue that this conservation strategy would never succeed if it were not accepted by all members of the Assembly, regardless of political party affiliations. He felt that some sort of consensus requirement was necessary. I do not see that working either, but I do see it as essential for the members of the various political parties, and the independents, to put their views so that the people of the Territory can carefully assess them.

I would like to pick up on a few points made by a number of members, principally the shadow spokesman, the member for Wanguri. He said that, prior to the Wanguri by-election, there had been an absence of the need for EISs in the Northern Territory. That is an incredible statement. It is wrong. There have been a number of cases in the Northern Territory where EISs have been undertaken. One that comes immediately to mind is the Pine Creek goldmine, where an EIS was undertaken prior to the commencement of mining. There have been others in relation to the Tindal RAAF Base, the Ranger Uranium Mine and what have you. It was an amazing statement for a shadow conservation minister to make.

He also raised the question of the Gouldian finch. I wonder if the member for Wanguri has ever seen a Gouldian finch, and I would have further doubts in relation to his knowledge of that particular bird and whether or not he would be able to tell us anything about the habitat of the species. I have the dubious record of bringing to people's attention the existence of the Gouldian finch population at Mt Todd. Of course that has been in the news for some time. It was about 1974 when I first noted them there and made reference to that in a number of papers. Over the years, it has become a place where people have gone to see the Gouldian finch. Of course, it is not the only place where one can see a Gouldian finch and it is not the only place where the Gouldian finch breeds. It is a place which has gained considerable attention in recent months because there happens to be a proposal to develop a goldmine there. The opposition has seen fit to grasp this issue in an effort to promote its support for the environmental and conservation movement.

Whilst there are not extensive records of breeding areas of the Gouldian finch, there is little doubt that it does breed elsewhere, and there is little doubt also that there is a great deal of work to be done in relation to its biology and its distribution. It is rather disappointing that people grasp an issue such as the Gouldian finch population at Mt Todd in an attempt to denigrate this government's ability to deal with conservation issues.

The position is that the Gouldian finch has been in decline for many years. It is an endangered species, not because of the prospect of mining at Mt Todd but because, over a long period, a combination of subtle factors has produced dramatic changes in its environment and habitat. They have contributed to its decline. The fact that the Mt Todd goldmine may or may not go ahead has little relevance, I believe, to the future existence of the Gouldian finch. Notwithstanding that, I think it is only right and proper that the studies now proposed should go ahead, and that every effort should be made to conserve the area where the Gouldian finch exists at Mt Todd. I raise that point because the honourable members opposite have seized on this type of issue in an effort to support their argument. Really, they are skating around the periphery of the issues, totally avoiding their substance, and simply looking for opportunities to promote a green image.

Mr Speaker, as I said, the member for Wanguri gave no indication, as shadow conservation spokesman, of what he would do in relation to some issues that have been raised in this strategy. In fact, his speech was comprised almost entirely of quotations from previous speeches made by honourable members in this House and elsewhere, and a string of cliches. I found it particularly disappointing.

He raised the subject of Tipperary Station. I doubt that he has been there, and that is a pity because I believe that Tipperary Station is an example of what can be done in the area of modern agriculture and land management. I have been there, and I must say that I was somewhat enlightened because, prior to my visit, there had been a great deal of discussion about land degradation. I was very much relieved and impressed by what I saw. The current owners of Tipperary Station are committing an enormous amount of money to stabilising areas that were cleared previously. They have been putting in check banks, directing water into natural drainage and so forth. Those works are going a long way toward correcting some problems which, admittedly, were created by earlier development. That is the process by which we learn. If we approached agriculture or, indeed, any development in the mood which is widespread today, we would never progress. In fact, I think we can all be somewhat relieved that the attitudes which are becoming so prominent today did not exist 50 or 100 years ago. If they had, we would still be a backward country.

All is not lost in relation to development. I believe that conservation and the environmental issues are a matter of balance, as the honourable minister has indicated. Much to the shame of the members opposite, that has apparently gone unnoticed. The clearing that is being undertaken at Tipperary Station is being done very sensitively and I believe that the same principles would govern any additional clearing. Corridors of vegetation have been left along natural drainage lines and, to my mind, these serve 2 purposes. Firstly, of course, they sustain the vegetation and provide corridors for the movement of wildlife. As well, they have the ability to provide shade for stock, which is also very important. Secondly, however, they serve to consolidate the soil and prevent erosion along the watercourses. Before the member for Wanguri makes too many more brash statements, I think he really should take the opportunity to go and have a look at some of the activities which relate to his shadow responsibilities. He might then be able to speak out in a manner that is more advised. Certainly, he would be very much more aware of what the circumstances are on the ground.

The situation in relation to uranium mining is similar. The Minister for Mines and Energy used the example of the Ranger Uranium Mine, saying that it occupies an area of in the order of 4 km<sup>2</sup> and that there had not been any serious breaches in relation to environmental damage. That provides a good example of how modern mining practices can enable mining to proceed in a very sensitive environment. I do not think that anyone denies that the Kakadu wetlands are a very sensitive environment, but the fact is that the successes are on the board. The score is up and, to my mind at least, Ranger provides a fine example of how mining can occur, with the proper safeguards, in sensitive areas.

I believe that this government has a good record on conservation. The record of the Conservation Commission stands out amongst conservation authorities throughout Australia. Conservation and protection of the environment is not restricted just to the Conservation Commission. Other departments have similar responsibilities in carrying out their activities. The Department of Mines and Energy, as the minister indicated, is one. Officers of my department and scientists are also working to conserve wildlife. For example, our natural fish stocks are being monitored. A lot of work is being done on the barramundi, which is a very important resource to the Northern Territory. That work will serve to ensure that management practices are put in place which will conserve the barramundi for future generations.

Mr Speaker, members opposite really need to broaden their vision and see what is going on around them. A great deal is going on and I will refer to some of the activities which are occurring. Over the years, the Conservation Commission has undertaken a lot of work in relation to various conservation matters. The donkey control program is one that comes to mind. I mention that program, which involved the control of large numbers of feral donkeys, particularly in the VRD district, because it arose partially from the Conservation Commission's awareness of the need to address land degradation problems. Land degradation matters are often brought before this Assembly by members opposite but they seldom seem to recognise any work that has been done by this government.

When the donkey control program was first initiated, there was some resistance from some pastoralists. They anticipated that they would incur costs which they had not faced previously and that it would remove a resource, the donkeys, which might be of some value to them in the future. However, by example, the Conservation Commission demonstrated that the program was

worthwhile. It conducted it on some properties and, over a period of a few years, the adjoining properties soon came to realise that there were benefits to be gained from eliminating donkeys, from the point of view of stabilisation of soils, minimisation of overgrazing, and the greater amounts of feed available to cattle. In the end, all the pastoralists in the VRD joined in and took part in that program.

Earlier this year, the mangrove management program commenced in Darwin Harbour, and I think that program is commendable. Interestingly, it was raised with me whilst I was in Asia recently. It was raised in a political perspective, in the context of the view that there are not many votes to be gained by saving mangroves. On a couple of occasions, I was asked what had happened in the Northern Territory in relation to mangrove management. The response was one of surprise. The officers concerned indicated that they were having difficulties in making their government understand the importance of conserving mangroves in relation to fishery resources and, of course, the protection of a natural environment. In initiating the mangrove management program, this government is something of a leader. I recall that, in debate on the matter, in its usual manner, the opposition was very critical, saying that the program did not go far enough, did not do this and should have done that. Of course, the opposition did not say what it would do, which is what we have come to expect. The program is limited to the Darwin area, which is the principal area of the Northern Territory coast where there is constant development. Clearly, there was a need to put in place some strategy for protection of the mangrove system. The program is particularly relevant, given that there are government authorities, not only in Australia but overseas, which have an interest in that type of management strategy and which regard the Northern Territory government as a leader in the field of conservation since it has shown great initiative in introducing such strategies.

Mr Speaker, I have not yet mentioned the fact that the area set aside for national parks and reserves in the Northern Territory is rather extensive. I am proud to say that I had some involvement in national parks in the past and I am particularly proud in relation to the Gregory National Park, which is about 10 000 km<sup>2</sup> in area. As I have indicated in previous debates in this House, I took part in the acquisition of land for that park. It provides a very good example of this government's commitment to conservation. It is a contiguous area of land in a very important part of the Northern Territory from the point of view of conservation. It incorporates a number of major river systems and, of course, some very scenic country where the soils are susceptible to erosion. Together with other areas which have been set aside in the Northern Territory, it provides yet another example of the achievements of this government in the area of conservation.

I refer to the government's good record on conservation and protection of the environment for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates that, for a long time, we have had a great awareness of the need to protect the environment. Recognising that we have the points on the board gives a clear indication of this government's ability to address the present-day needs and, indeed, the needs of the future in relation to environmental management and conservation issues. That point has been overlooked by members opposite and they would do well to consider it.

Mr Speaker, I support the statement. I would ask all honourable members to encourage the general public to become involved in commenting on the paper 'On Balance - Towards a Conservation Strategy for the Northern Territory'. It is a discussion paper, another fact which has been overlooked by the

honourable members opposite. Sadly, they have indicated that they will not be providing a response to the paper or putting forward any ideas in relation to the future conservation and environmental needs of the Northern Territory. That is a very irresponsible decision on their part, and one that will no doubt be looked upon very sadly by the people of the Northern Territory. I support the minister's motion, Mr Speaker, and I encourage public involvement in putting forward comment in relation to the discussion document.

Mr HATTON (Conservation): Mr Speaker, this afternoon's debate has been very interesting. Having survived the opposition's vain attempts to forestall the commencement of this debate by means of the ridiculous games it was playing this morning, we have got down to some discussion on conservation.

The discussion paper and my statement are aimed to generate a non-political community discussion about the future directions for the Northern Territory, particularly in respect of the balance between conservation and development, and to encourage the community to become part of that. Government members presented a vast array of facts and data about the achievements, directions and the innovations of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission and the Northern Territory government during the past decade and longer, in respect of conservation and environmental protection and enhancement. Unfortunately, we heard nothing from the opposition but some glib phrases and unsubstantiated broad-brush criticisms, which added nothing of substance and culminated in the extraordinary statement by the Leader of the Opposition that, in the process of public debate and consideration of an issue as significant as a conservation strategy for the Northern Territory, the ALP would not be presenting any form of submission and would not be participating in the process.

Mr Smith: That is right. We are sick of making you look good.

Mr HATTON: The opposition intends to continue secretly developing its own so-called conservation strategy in isolation from the broad community. The opposition has no interest in talking openly with the community and putting up its ideas for public comment. It wants to hide in the back room and develop its own secret plan. The world will run straight past the opposition. Mr Speaker, those days are gone.

Mr Smith: It will not be too secret. It will knock your socks off.

Mr HATTON: You must bring the total community into this process ...

Mr Smith: What do you think we have been doing?

Mr HATTON: ... not just a few mates and interest groups. If the comments of the shadow spokesman are any indication, we should not hold out too much hope that anything of value will flow from it. For a person who claims to be a shadow spokesman on environmental and conservation matters to state that what needs to be done is to pass a law requiring public comment in respect of environmental impact statements is an almost unbelievable demonstration of the opposition's ignorance. Already the law requires public comment in respect of environmental impact statements. That is just one example.

The opposition spokesman also referred to vast areas of what he called 'degradation' on Douglas Station. Again, he demonstrated incredible ignorance. All pasture development on that station and the related properties in that area has been carried out under careful supervision on the advice and at the direction of the soil conservation officers of the Conservation Commission.

Mr Bailey: What about public input?

Mr HATTON: It has been done as it should be done and it is a model for the development of pastoral properties in Australia, in the level of protection of wildlife habitat and the protection of the soil.

Mr Bailey: What about the hippopotamuses?

Mr HATTON: That sort of nonsense comment from the shadow spokesman is a demonstration of what happens when a person listens to pub gossip.

Mr Smith: Why don't you have an EIS for that sort of thing?

Mr HATTON: We were asked why we have not made any comment in respect of the issue of uranium and its impact on the wetlands in Kakadu. Mr Speaker, I seem to remember that, even in the short 6-year period I have been in this Assembly, there have been about 10 debates in this House - and that is probably an understatement - about uranium mining and Kakadu National Park. The subject has been debated to the point where honourable members opposite have stated that it has been debated to death. That has been their argument. We have stated our position in relation to that matter on many occasions. We support the findings of things like the Fox Royal Commission, which support uranium mining under strictly controlled conditions.

Mr Smith: Do you support sequential uranium mining?

Mr HATTON: I say, Mr Speaker, that the development which has occurred there ...

Mr Smith: Sequential uranium mining, do you support it?

Mr HATTON: ... and the continuing environmental reports have shown no environmental damage as a consequence of mining.

Mr Smith: Do you support the Fox Report and sequential uranium mining?

Mr HATTON: The Leader of the Opposition asks whether I support sequential development. I say that that sort of 2-dimensional pat nonsense ...

Mr Smith: That is what Fox says!

Mr HATTON: Fox suggested sequential development because of the potential impact on the Aboriginal people. I might say also that Fox recommended that we should not encourage tourism development in the area because that could have an adverse effect on the Aboriginal people there.

Mr Bailey: Do you support that?

Mr HATTON: I do not support that either. There are elements of the Fox Report that I do not support, but I recognise that the environmental controls have been demonstrated to operate effectively in allowing mining in that area. If all the proposed mines in the Alligator Rivers region were commenced and went into full production simultaneously, the total effect on Kakadu Stages 1, 2 and 3 in terms of land disturbance would relate to about 0.75% of the total area. It would be dramatically less than the surface disturbance caused by roads and tourism in the area. The environmental controls that have been and would be imposed would ensure that there was no environmental damage. The problem with members opposite is that they are not prepared to look at the

facts. They want to waffle on with sweeping statements. They do not want to hear facts. They do not want to look at the reality. They want to make cheap headlines.

I do not resilie from what we said and did in relation to Kakadu Stages 2 and 3. The federal Labor government refused to follow its own procedures for World Heritage listing and it received a rap over the knuckles from the international body because of that. Finally, it was brought to heel. Now, it does consult with the states. That was a positive result of our involvement. Another interesting aspect is that the only detailed biological and environmental assessment of Kakadu Stage 2 that ever went to the World Heritage Commission came from the Northern Territory. The Commonwealth government had not done anything. It was playing politics in the exercise. Our complaints related to lack of consultation and inadequate assessment of the area before consideration was given to nomination for listing as a World Heritage park in toto. We have always believed that parts of that park should be available for World Heritage listing, but not all of it. We maintain that position. That position applies equally in respect of Kakadu Stage 3.

Mr Smith: It is a pity your federal Liberal colleagues do not agree with you.

Mr HATTON: I think that you will find that they do.

Mr Smith: They are not going to mine Kakadu Stage 2.

Mr HATTON: It is interesting to note the research that has been carried out at Kapalga because it blows many myths out of the water. That research has demonstrated that there is not a single ecosystem in the area but a series of repeating ecosystems following the streams. The destruction of any one of those ecosystems does not have an impact on other ecosystems upstream or downstream. That is an interesting conclusion when one looks at the impact of development on the general ecosystem in the region. That is a matter that members opposite continually refuse even to acknowledge.

In relation to Coronation Hill, I refer to debates that have occurred in this House this year. An environmental assessment has been completed and the recommendation of the federal government's professional advisers was that there were no environmental reasons for not allowing mining to proceed. They recommended that mining should go ahead. It has been stopped for political purposes, not environmental purposes. I do not have any problems about this government's stand in relation to that issue. However, we never hear about where the Northern Territory ALP stands in relation to any such issues. Members opposite waffle and criticise, but they never specifically state their position or indicate what they would do in government. They should put up or shut up.

The member for Barkly raised a couple of issues that deserve a response. Recycling and waste disposal have been addressed both in my speech and in the discussion paper. I do not think any of the members opposite have read the discussion document even though it was distributed prior to the debate. If they had, they would not have made some of the comments which they have made.

The member for Barkly referred to environmental improvement and control in respect of urban development. At pages 28 and 29 of the discussion document, that issue is addressed under the headings 'The Good Life - Enhancing Human Settlement' and 'Open Space'. Those sections refer to issues associated with beautification of our urban environment. There are other references to that



matter elsewhere, including the recycling of non-renewable resources and the effective and economic utilisation of non-renewable resources.

Mr Bailey: There is nothing in there about effective recycling.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I have stated during the course of these sittings and in my speech that the Conservation Commission is working on policy in relation to the whole issue of recycling. That will be done in a proper and considered manner. We are working with TRACC. Unlike members of the opposition, I cannot attend every meeting that is occurring in the Northern Territory simultaneously. I can arrange for people to be at those meetings and ensure that I am kept advised of what occurred at them. We have had representation at those meetings and I have been fully briefed on the outcomes. I support the direction which that group is taking and I am offering the assistance of staff from the Environment Unit of the Conservation Commission. I look forward to a good working relationship with such organisations.

Other matters that were raised included motor vehicle fuel emission and energy conservation. In my speech, I did not deal with energy conservation. However, over the years the Northern Territory government has been involved in a number of developments in relation to energy conservation. We cannot exclude the significant advances that have been made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the Northern Territory. Although the project was not carried out specifically for that purpose, there have been dramatic reductions in carbon dioxide emissions resulting from the conversion from oil to gas in Northern Territory power stations.

Mr Bailey interjecting.

Mr HATTON: The member for Wanguri has put his foot in it again. He ought to be careful. He is in it up to about his ankles at the moment and, if he keeps going, he will have difficulty breathing. If anyone thinks that the Greenhouse Effect, the hole in the ozone layer and the issue of the carbon cycle is not relevant to environmental conservation, he really ought to go back to kindergarten. It will dominate the geopolitical environment.

Mr Bailey: The conversion to gas was not a conservation decision.

Mr HATTON: The member for Wanguri has jumped in again. He is in about up to his knees now. He is getting into more trouble. We will leave him with his merry dreams.

Our energy conservation program, which we have had in place for 5 years, has resulted in dramatic improvements. We have encouraged the installation of solar hot water systems. We have undertaken research into solar energy and wind energy and there are the solar ponds in central Australia. There is research into solar supported generating systems for police stations and community health centres in rural areas. All these policies are aimed at energy conservation. We could do with some public support from members opposite to enable the construction of a powerline to Jabiru, enabling the conversion of the Ranger power station from oil to gas. Again, the result would be a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions in the Territory. We would also like active support for the gas pipeline to Gove to achieve the same aim. Our problems lie with the opposition's Labor mates in Canberra. They claim to have influence with the federal government and I urge them to use that influence.

Motor vehicle emissions were raised only by the member for Barkly. The issue should be looked at. One possible solution is conversion to gas, which would achieve avoidance of some atmospheric pollution. Other more innovative solutions can be examined but they will need much more development. I believe that we should be researching the feasibility of using hydrogen as the principal motive energy source for the future. Already, it has been demonstrated to work effectively in the existing internal combustion engine. Experiments have been carried out in the United States and Australia, and even in buses and trucks in West Germany. In fact, a couple of large commercial jet aircraft have been converted to fly intercontinentally using hydrogen as a power source. Of course, that avoids the burning of hydrocarbons and the potential polluting effects. However, more work is required in terms of the economic availability of hydrogen to make such options feasible. That is an area which we could perhaps consider.

Mr Speaker, in the brief amount of time that I have available to complete my remarks, I would ask the community to forget the ALP. Obviously, it wants to shut itself out of this process, although I suppose ALP members will reserve the coward's right to wait until someone else has done the hard work before sitting back and criticising the results. I urge the community at large to take the discussion paper seriously and to study it. If people are aware of subjects which we have not raised, I ask them to raise them, and to bring them forward for public debate and consideration. If we are to develop a strategy for the future, it needs to come from the community. We urge the community to be actively involved and to have ownership of this strategy for the community.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE  
Education System in the Northern Territory

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

Dear Mr Speaker,

Pursuant to standing order 94, I propose for discussion as a definite matter of public importance this morning the following matter: the grave concern of educationalists, parents and the community regarding the government's failure to adequately plan and implement a coherent and effective system of education for Territory children.

Yours sincerely,  
Brian Ede.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank honourable members for their support. The point of bringing forward this MPI is that, as we move towards the end of the school year, it is appropriate to have a look at just where we are in terms of the community's confidence in our education system, the directions we are taking, and the results that we can expect next year on the basis of the results obtained this year. During this discussion I will be demonstrating that, unfortunately, there are a number of raging bushfires throughout the total breadth of the education system, bushfires which the honourable minister has been either unable or unwilling to put out. It is most unfortunate that we have to bring this matter of public importance

forward at this stage but I think that honourable members will see, by the time we get through this debate, that there are some very important issues which must be addressed by the minister in his remarks or, if he fails to do so, by the Chief Minister.

There are a large number of points to speak on and I will go through as many as I possibly can. My honourable colleague the Leader of the Opposition will follow. I raise my first point in order to demonstrate the present situation in relation to a very substantial and important subject in the area of Aboriginal education. I refer to the Year 5 assessments carried out in Northern Territory Aboriginal schools through the primary assessment program. This assessment is carried out on a system-wide basis, with 34 linked items being used in 1986, 1987 and 1988. In town schools, the program is used to test the ability of Year 5 students to handle the core objectives of Year 5. In Aboriginal schools, the test was administered to students from Years 5, 6, and 7.

Let us have a look at the results over the last few years. The figures are the means in terms of linked tasks performed correctly, expressed as a percentage. In 1986, 58.7% of students got tasks right. That was not a very good result but, by 1987, the figure had declined to 46.2% and in 1988 it was 41.4%. In the last 3 years, Aboriginal students in Years 5, 6 and 7 and post-primary, have had their maths results drop from 58.7% to 41.4%. That demonstrates the gravity of the situation we are talking about and provides an initial demonstration of how important it is that the honourable minister start to address some of these issues. That is my first point.

Let us have a look at the next point, which concerns Batchelor College, where we hope that the honourable minister is developing a system which will equip Aboriginal people for the task of educating their students and for tasks in a number of other areas.

Mr Perron: If he gets his way, he will. If he gets his way.

Mr EDE: The Chief Minister says: 'If he gets his way, he will'. The honourable minister has been personally responsible, through his interference in the process of establishing the board, for delaying the total process of getting that institution ready for next year. I put this point in the debate on the initial setting up of the college's legislation. Of the 70-odd staff who were at the college as of last week, only 11 had been confirmed in their positions, along with another 6 with various riders, making 17 in total. That is how many of the staff at the college actually know that they have a job next year and which position they will fill.

What is the result of that? It is that staff members are wondering about their own security of tenure and whether they will be able to get a job next year. Of course, they are looking elsewhere. I know of a case in point already. A teacher who has a top position at Batchelor, who is well thought of by the Aboriginal people and who has a good relationship with them, has already decided that he will have to take a position on a much higher salary in Papua New Guinea, even though he would prefer by far to stay in the Northern Territory. The director has not been appointed and probably will not be appointed till mid-December. I am told that the appointee should take up the position next year. That means that senior staff cannot be placed in positions at present. Of course, those people who do not have positions know that the major round of staffing applications is over. The minor round is just about complete and they are in danger of being left in the lurch. It is an incredible shame. The minister has put Batchelor College into a situation

where it is worse off than ever it was in relation to the previous problems with funding.

Let us look further afield at the situation of teachers who are working out bush, particularly in terms of retention rates, which have a great impact in terms of teachers coming to know the communities in which they work and being able to deliver good quality education. I am told that South Australia now has an overall average retention rate of more than 2 years for teachers in bush areas. In Western Australia, the figure is 1.75 years. In the Northern Territory, it is less than 6 months. That is all we have managed to achieve.

We must look at some of the terms and conditions which may be driving people out. The issue was discussed in a debate the other day but let us quickly identify the key factors again. In Western Australia, a 3-bedroom house for a married couple is considered the norm in remote areas. Single people share a 3-bedroom house. If teachers are forced to live in silver bullets or tents, as they are in the Northern Territory, they are actually paid a special daily allowance to compensate them. Yet, in my electorate, we have a man, his wife and 5 children, all living in a silver bullet. That is absolutely ridiculous in this day and age.

On the subject of allowances, as I said the other day, the amount for single people in Western Australia is nearly as high as \$4000. In South Australia, there is a package rate, including components for vehicle maintenance, locality allowance and so forth, which comes to between \$5000 and \$6000 for single people and to over \$7000 for married people.

Let us look at induction courses. One of the most common outcomes when young people come to the Northern Territory and are sent out to teach in an Aboriginal community is that they experience culture shock, alienation and isolation. In South Australia, this is acknowledged and people undergo a 3-week induction course, during which they spend a full week in the community in which they are to teach. After that, they are brought back to reassess their position on the basis of some experience of the situation in the community and to get their heads clear before they go out again. In the Northern Territory, 2 days is available for induction purposes, with a call back at some time later in the term. Of course that applies if you are a recruit at the beginning of the year. However, if you are unfortunate enough to have been recruited during the year, you get nothing. Is it any wonder that our retention rate is so low, with such terms and conditions? I heard nothing about induction courses in the package introduced the other day. It is a crying shame that people who are expected to provide education to children out bush are not given adequate backup and assistance. Is it any wonder that the results are as poor as the mathematics assessment indicated?

My fourth point relates to outstation education. Mr Speaker, you would think that the minister would have come to grips with outstation education by now, but the Department of Education still does not accept its obligation to provide basic necessities like water and toilets at outstation schools. Look at a place like Banyala. For 3 years they have had 35 children out there with 90% plus attendance, and they are located in a tin shed. The assistant teachers who work out there are all employed on a year-by-year basis. They do not know whether they have a job next year. They do not know what the situation will be. They have absolutely no security of tenure. How can that be justified in a decent education system?

I turn to my fifth point, which the honourable minister spoke about in a rather glib fashion the other day. It concerns the Aboriginal education

policy which the federal government has initiated, the Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program. The other day, in his reply to a question, the honourable minister said the government was supportive of the direction being taken by this program. The fact is, however, that the honourable minister has yet to comply with the first basic requirement in that he has yet to write to the federal minister to advise that he endorses the program. Mr Speaker, I can tell you that the people down there are running out of patience with the shenanigans of this Minister for Education. He spoke the other day about looking at some \$4m or \$5m whereas, in fact, the existing base is \$8.2m ...

Mr Harris: Yes. How did we get it? Because of us fighting for it. That is how we got it.

Mr EDE: ... and, subject to agreement, the Northern Territory could get as much as \$15m, an increase of as much as 80%. That is almost half of the new money available, but it is only available if the honourable minister gets his act together. If he continues to refuse to endorse the program, there is a very real danger that the federal government will walk.

The federal government's complaint is basically that the Northern Territory government is interested only in inputs, in getting its hands on the money. It will not define the outputs. It will not define what it will do with this money or what its goals are. This is the point we questioned every minister on in the budget debate - their failure to set goals, determine strategies and set objectives that achievements can be measured against. Well, the federal government wants to know about those things in this area. It wants to know what will be achieved through this program. If the federal government gets that information, up to \$15m can become available, almost half of the new money for the Northern Territory. If it does not get it, plenty of states are lining up. When we do not even have the minister's endorsement for the program, an endorsement which has been given by the relevant ministers in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, and everywhere else, is it any wonder that the honourable minister can be accused of putting his head on the chopping block and waiting for someone to lop it off? Then he will try to say that it is all the fault of the federal government: 'Look at me, poor me'. It is just not good enough. The honourable minister will have to lift his game, and that seems to be impossible.

In terms of my sixth point, the minister was carrying on saying that I had been to one of his consultations out bush and heard what he was saying, as though I endorsed it. I was pleading with him about not attending his consultation. I wanted to get out and go somewhere else but he was worried that everybody might want to talk to me instead of him. In fact, I was trying to convince the people to stay with him because they had a couple of issues that they wanted to raise. For the whole of the time that I was able to stay, the minister did not want to talk about their issues. All he wanted to talk about was his issues.

Let us have a quick look at the matters which the honourable minister is asking Aboriginal communities to discuss. He visits the communities at the rate of about 4 a day. During a period of a couple of hours, people are supposed to discuss a list of issues which runs to 3 pages, which I will table so that honourable members can have a look at it. I do not have time to read out all the subheadings. I will just go through the major headings, Mr Speaker, and you will see that the list goes on and on: bilingual education; employment; access to school; school councils; students not at school; health matters; staffing matters; school matters in relation to guidelines of where and when they should be built; educational standards in

relation to student achievement, testing and homework; secondary education, including community education centres, Kormilda, Yirara and so on; Batchelor College, including the RATE program and new courses; other colleges such as ASCOT, Katherine Rural College and the NT Open College; the Northern Territory University, including helping Aboriginal people attend the university; and FEPPi. In the space of a couple of hours, the community is supposed to have an in-depth consultation with the minister in relation to those issues.

It is pointless to talk to the honourable minister in relation to this matter. He just does not understand. I have said before that Uncle Tom is a nice enough bloke but he really does not understand.

Mr Harris: I have already received some submissions on those matters.

Mr EDE: You have already received some submissions, probably in desperation because, as I heard a person say of the consultation in one community, only 3 people and a dog stuck around to hear the minister, and the only one who listened was the dog.

Mr Harris: Here we go. Knock, knock, knock.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the seventh point relates to Yirara College. The honourable minister knows of the outrage of Aboriginal people at their inability to obtain the JSSC through that college. He says that the JSSC which they previously received was no good, so what does he do? He does not do what might be expected. He does not upgrade the course and make sure that the JSSC is a good one. He knocks it out. Mr Speaker, that is absolutely outrageous. Is it any wonder that people are taking him to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission? Is it any wonder that they are taking him to court? People want secondary education.

I ask the honourable minister if he has the gumption to stand up here and tell us how many people have completed secondary education in the Northern Territory and how many of those are Aboriginal people who have completed it through his system. How many, Mr Speaker?

Mr Harris: Perhaps they are not up to primary level. There might be a problem.

Mr EDE: It might be a problem. You do not know the answers or you are too embarrassed to give them.

There are problems in secondary education generally out bush. Honourable members would have heard how Ngukurr tried to get a secondary school facility located in that community. It has 25 students studying interstate and another 25 students at Kormilda, all at secondary level. But would the honourable the minister concede that there was a possibility of the community having its own secondary high school? No way in the world, Mr Speaker. As I said, the minister's vision of Aboriginal people is as hewers of wood and carters of water.

Mr Finch: You are disgraceful. You are a disgusting person.

Mr EDE: Disgraceful, you say?

Mr Speaker, let us have a look at the community education centres. Is it possible for a student at a community education centre to go through that program and obtain the JSSC so that he can move on to Years 11 and 12, attend

university and become an engineer like the honourable interjector? Is it possible for those students to do anything like that by going through the program which the minister has set up? No, Mr Speaker, it is not. The curriculum has been developed in such a way that there is no academic stream leading to the JSSC. In fact, there is not even a curriculum in place which allows those students to do what the minister wants them to do. It is an absolute disgrace.

Let us start moving back into the urban areas. Everybody knows of the problems which occur at the start of every year at places like Tennant Creek, Katherine, Anzac Hill and so forth. Every year, small high schools have the same problems in establishing staff levels according to formula. Every year we have the same battle. The minister set up the Small High Schools Working Party. I thought that might result in some imaginative decisions and some new ideas about how such problems might be addressed. The working party has met once, and that was a long time ago. Nothing has come out of it. Unless this minister gets his tail into gear during the Christmas break, we will have the same old problem again next year. The Tennant Creek and Anzac Hill High Schools will once again find that they do not have the staff they need to provide a basic range of education services. That is absolutely outrageous.

Then we come to Nhulunbuy High School. We have heard about it before but nothing has come back from the honourable minister. This year, 16 teachers out of a total of 23 are leaving. One of the key reasons for that is the exorbitant cost of living and the shortage of housing. They feel that there is no incentive to remain in that isolated area. We even hear that there is some dispute as to whether Nhulunbuy is fully classified as a remote area. The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government indicated yesterday that, under the new package, teachers in Nhulunbuy will be entitled to a 50% rental rebate. However, the Minister for Education failed to mention Nhulunbuy in his speech. The package delivered by this government yesterday is too little too late for this group of teachers and as a consequence the education system has lost a considerable body of expertise and commitment. That, too, is absolutely outrageous.

Unfortunately I am running out of time and I will have to ask my honourable colleague to take up the remainder of my 11 points. I have been able to rattle those points off the top of my head, Mr Speaker, but there are many more to be made in any area of education which you like to mention.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that the honourable member be granted an extension of time to enable him to finish his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr EDE: Thank you, honourable members.

Mr Harris: That is all right. You can make a fool of yourself, Brian.

Mr EDE: I will not take up too much of the time of the House but there are a few more points which need to be placed on the record because I want the honourable minister to take them on board. I want him to read his notes or the Hansard record so that he can come back to us when the House sits again and give some sort of indication that he has taken the problems on board and solved them at least to some extent.

We have only to consider the problems with the Year 10 exams and where they have left us. Those are the sort of harebrained schemes which the

honourable minister implements, disrupting the entire education system when he should be getting on and tackling the problems which I have already described. He brings in these harebrained schemes which throw his whole department into turmoil and deflect effort away from the real needs in education.

As we have said before, the examinations were a retrograde step in the opinion of most educational experts. They turned out to be a complete farce. In the mathematics exam, students were given an option to choose 15 out of 20 questions. Some questions were much harder than others, yet all were weighted equally with 10 marks. Some of the questions related to subject matter which had not even been taught at that stage of the year. While I am on the subject, I will say that I have had a response from educationalists throughout the Territory who say that, now that the exams are over, it is very difficult to gee the kids up again and get them to continue working until the end of the year because they say that the exams are over. What a stupid way to run a program, Mr Speaker!

I understand that an attempt was made to standardise the raw marks in order to give some sort of equal weight to the questions. The results, yet to be produced, were obviously tampered with in order to fit in with the expectations of the proponents of Year 10 exams. We have been told that Sanderson High students fared particularly well despite the existence of the infamous vertical timetabling system criticised by the Secretary of the Department of Education, but what a disaster! Who could possibly have any faith in the system after that?

Let us consider the issue of vertical timetabling. Sanderson High School expressed considerable concern over the proposal to establish minimum timetabling for English and maths, Mr Speaker. That was not only the view of Sanderson High, as honourable members know. The same views came from places like Anzac Hill High and other schools operating vertical timetables. They were outraged, not with the proposal for minimum times, but because students were to be forced to progress in a lock-step fashion, semester by semester, in those 2 subjects. In other words, if my daughter were doing particularly well in English, having completed the core requirements and being well ahead, but was falling behind in maths, she could not stop English for a term and double up in maths in order to try to catch up again. Mr Speaker, that is what it comes down to when you cut away all the rubbish, all the talk about 'Marxists' out at the 'Sandanista High School'. That is the basic and fundamental point and it is something that we on this side of the House will not accept.

Sanderson High School's comments on the proposals were sent to the Board of Studies in a confidential submission. How did it find its way to the front page of the NT News? Well, Mr Speaker, I would say that the minister's office might have had something to do with that. The minister has not denied it and I think that we ought to put the finger just there. We will see whether he denies it in this debate because he has had about 6 opportunities to deny that he leaked that submission to the NT News. Obviously, he has a chance to deny it in this debate.

Mr Speaker, Sanderson High and other schools with vertical timetables have proved that they offer a system that works. They proved it even according to the minister's own guidelines, the crazy Year 10 examinations. They certainly proved it in the allocation of prizes for excellence in mathematics. At a public meeting at Sanderson High School held 2 weeks ago, there was major public support for the school's approach to education. Conspicuous by their absence were all the local CLP members.



Members interjecting

Mr EDE: There was no way in the world that they were going to turn up there, Mr Speaker. They were all invited. Sanderson High School sent them invitations and said: 'Please come along'.

Mr Manzie: Some of us have other things to do.

Mr EDE: Oh, you have more important things to do.

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr EDE: There was no way in the world that the temporary member for Leanyer - and we know that the Gouldian finch is an endangered species - was going to turn up there and face the wrath of the parents at the actions of his colleague the Minister for Education, neither were any other of his colleagues. It was absolutely outrageous and disgusting.

Mr Finch: I will tell you about that too, later.

Mr EDE: Last year, the government talked about 'Towards the 90s', its wonderful blueprint for the future. With all its talk about devolution, it was going to take us forward into the 1990s. Of course, every time a school attempts to utilise some of the freedom which the honourable minister has supposedly given it, the noose goes around its neck and it is pulled back, just as happened with Sanderson High.

Let me turn to another school, Mr Speaker - Gray Primary School. The school was faced with the need to change principals. One of the very significant concepts of devolution that was negotiated for that particular school - and it was all written up and put to meetings and so on - was the right, not to control, but to input on the appointment of its principal. Gray Primary School soon discovered what it meant to be part of a pilot program. The key component of the school council's participation in the appointment of the principal was absolutely ignored. When a vacancy occurred and the position of principal had to be filled, the Department of Education decided to transfer a teacher from Katherine, without any consultation whatsoever with the school council. The council was very unhappy about that and it would appear that the teacher from Katherine was not too happy with being put in the hot seat in that way. He took leave and a temporary appointment was made. Again, there was no consultation. If the person who is on leave comes back to take up his substantive position, the council has absolutely no option but to accept that. As I said, the minister's mouth works all the time. He mouths policies of devolution of power and the achievement of excellence, but what he really means is that schools have the same freedom as a dog on a chain.

Let us look at Driver High School, Mr Speaker. We all read with concern the article in the Sunday Territorian 2 weeks ago. It painted a picture which suggested that many adolescents living in Palmerston had significant problems. We all know that the Housing Commission has an enormous number of vacant houses in the area and that, if anyone is in desperate need of accommodation, they can move into a house there without having to wait for too long. There are a number of low-income single-parent families in a state of crisis and, of course, many children have severe emotional problems. It is important that those children have access to a whole range of support services and it is essential that they have access to a school counsellor who can assist teachers in handling the sorts of problems which develop in the school situation. Driver High School has had to utilise a teacher's position to create a school

counsellor position. That is a clear example of how this government is not committed to providing adequate school counselling services.

It is time the government understood the need for school counsellors and the need to have a method of looking after disinclined students. Previously, the Minister for Education created these school counsellor positions and subsequently ripped out the funding so that schools had to provide those positions from within their teaching staff allocations. That was what happened to the system which he created to fix the problem. The fact of the matter is that, with the amount of resources available to them, schools are finding it extremely difficult to take positions from areas such as English or maths teaching in order to provide school counselling resources. When the problem arose at Driver High, instead of backing up the school and recognising the problem, the minister remained behind a wall of silence. He gave no support to the school. There was a deafening silence. Teachers were being accused of standing by and allowing fights to develop. He did not stand up and say: 'I do not believe that. My teachers did the best that they could. They tried to intervene, and to battle their way through crowds of students to break up the fights'. That is actually what happened, Mr Speaker. When the story was blown up in the newspaper, in the same way that the minister blew up the story about Sanderson High, you would think that he would get out there and do something for his teachers. It ended up being necessary for me to go in to bat for them. Certainly, the honourable minister did not do it. We did not hear the local member say anything either.

Every time we start raising a few issues, people raise others. My colleague indicates that, in relation to the position of principal at Oenpelli school, there was no consultation whatsoever with the school council. That is one more example. You can go into any house anywhere in the Northern Territory and people will talk to you for ages about problems, especially in relation to secondary education and Aboriginal education. The problem is that the minister will not do his job. The fires are burning out of control. It is our children's future that is at stake. The minister is in a position to do something about it. Will he act? That is the issue that we will dwell on for the next couple of months while this Assembly is in recess.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, what a performance! Can I start by saying that the member for Stuart, the opposition spokesman on education, started off with an outrageous statement about bushfires everywhere. The person with the matches is the member for Stuart himself. He is lighting them. He wants the bushfires to rage.

Mr Ede: What a load of rubbish!

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, in the Northern Territory, the education system has been working smoothly. Have a look at the industrial disruption in New South Wales, Western Australia and other states.

The member for Stuart spoke for 20 minutes and he did not even touch on the issues raised in the matter of public importance. He had an extension of time and, even then, he gave a pathetic performance. He touched on a variety of issues which could have been raised during the course of an adjournment debate or at question time. The matter of public importance reads as follows: 'The grave concern of educationalists, parents and the community regarding the government's failure to adequately plan and implement a coherent and effective system of education for Territory children'. I will address that particular matter of public importance because, quite frankly, the opposition does not know what it is all about.

On 1 July 1979, when the Northern Territory government took over responsibility for education, there were: no comprehensive set of policies; no approved curricula at any level; no system of TAFE accreditation or training policy; minimal involvement of industry in education, training and planning; no comprehensive provision for primary, secondary and special education; no university; no opportunities for community and parental input into schools and no Territory-wide advisory network; no system for devolution and regionalisation; no system of public accountability; no computer education courses; no distance education system; no scholarships or student assistance schemes; no comprehensive staff development systems; archaic administrative systems and no administrative manuals and handbooks. In the 10 years since we took control, we have transformed the Northern Territory education system into one of the best in Australia. It is one of the best staffed and best resourced systems in Australia. It has a level of effectiveness and performance at least on a par with the rest of Australia. It has all the systems and networks of a progressive education system.

There are comprehensive policies in every area which have been developed through wide consultation and set out in documents such as 'Direction for the Eighties', 'Towards the 90s', and FEPPi's 12-point plan. A review of Aboriginal education is under way, and I will touch on that in a minute because the member for Stuart has raised the matter. We have policies in relation to languages other than English, the approved curriculum at all levels from Year 1 to Year 12 and a whole range of other areas. We have the Board of Studies; subject area committees; a comprehensive system of accreditation of TAFE courses and planning for TAFE through the establishment of the TAFE Advisory Council; extensive involvement of industry on all TAFE advisory committees; course assessment committees; college councils; and other advisory bodies or councils such as the Education Advisory Council. A comprehensive system also exists in respect of the delivery of preschool, primary and secondary services and to cater to students with special needs. A university, which is a full member of the national system, has been developed. There is now more opportunity for parental and community input here than anywhere else in Australia. Nevertheless, the opposition is saying that we do nothing, have no policies and do not plan where we are going. I am annoyed because the opposition continually spouts this nonsense about lack of direction and lack of consultation. It is not true.

Mr Ede: We know where you are going. You are going around in circles.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, the government has established an Education Advisory Council. It has legislated to establish school councils. There are now 68 schools councils, including 10 in Aboriginal communities. Financially, we support parent organisations such as COGSO, the ICPA and also the independent school parent organisations. We have arranged for parents to chair all promotion panels and for school councils to have input into duty statements. The government has implemented the most comprehensive system of devolution in Australia, supported by a detailed guide for school councils and parental in-service courses. We have brought administration closer to the people by establishing regional offices in Nhulunbuy, Katherine, Palmerston, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. A comprehensive system of public accountability has been established involving both internal and external assessment.

In addition, there are early childhood screening programs, primary school assessment programs at Years 5 to 7, the Year 10 moderation and external assessment package, Year 11 moderation and accreditation, Year 12 Northern Territory courses and the certificated courses of the Senior Secondary

Assessment Board of South Australia. We have school appraisals, peer assessment for promotion, the Master Teacher Scheme, probationary assessment, superintendent reports on each school annually, and individual research and evaluation reports. We have also the most comprehensive system of computer education in Australia.

We have the Distance Education Branch to coordinate the School of the Air, the Secondary Correspondence School and the NT Open College. I will be talking about that later because the member for Wanguri raised the matter. We introduced a comprehensive package of student assistance schemes for isolated students, handicapped students, Year 8, 9 and 10 students from lower-income families, and scholarships for higher achievers and trainee teachers. Also, we have established a network of teacher centres and a comprehensive package of staff development schemes which leads Australia in in-service education, management training, computer training, study awards, study assistance and staff exchanges. We introduced a modern administrative handbook for schools and head office and a comprehensive Territory-wide computer-based network of school administration. Mr Deputy Speaker, when you look at that list, you can see that indeed a great deal of direction has been given as far as the government is concerned. Most of the matters raised by the honourable member did not relate to the matter of public importance. He could have raised them at any time during the course of the sittings in adjournment debates.

By the wording of the matter of public importance, the honourable member for Stuart is inferring that educationalists, parents and the community have not been involved and are not happy with the direction we are taking. I would like to know who the educationalists, parents and community members are who are concerned ...

Mr Ede: Do you want their names?

Mr HARRIS: You do not have to give me their names. I am saying that there are many people in the community who have supported the government system because it is a good system. You should talk to those people who have come here from the states and are having their children educated here.

The matter of public importance refers to 'the government's failure to adequately plan and implement a coherent and effective system'. It is total nonsense and the members of the opposition know it. They should be ashamed of themselves for raising it as a matter of public importance without even mentioning the matters that I am talking about. A few issues were raised which could have been addressed in an adjournment debate or at question time.

We have come a long way in 10 years and we are proud of our achievements. However, we recognise that the next 10 years will hold just as many challenges. We believe that we are in a position to continue improving our performance and to answer the new challenges that will emerge. Throughout the world, education is one of the most costly public services. In the Northern Territory, costs are considerably higher on a per capita basis because of the number of remote communities, vast distances between schools and our relatively small population. The member for Stuart knows that. He talks about South Australia, which has 6 to 10 communities out in the bush. We have outstations and there could be 600 of them scattered throughout the communities. We have to provide a service to those people and we are working to make sure that we can do so, with the help of the Commonwealth government.

Since 1979 our school enrolments have increased from around 27 500 to more than 35 000 in 1988, an increase of some 30%. Over the same period, the total

education budget has increased from around \$55m to \$194m. Although the same increased cost trend is evident throughout Australia, it has been more significant in the Territory. That demonstrates the total commitment of the Northern Territory government to providing the best possible education for Territory students. Even with such a large expenditure, the Northern Territory Department of Education, over the past 3 years, has been involved in an intense process of rationalising expenditure and ensuring the optimum use of available resources. This rationalisation will need to continue as Commonwealth education funding reduces further after major cuts in the period between 1986 and 1989. We do not need to be reminded about the \$100m that was taken from the Northern Territory government in that period.

Within the general climate of rationalisation, we have continued to work towards our major objectives and a number of high priority new initiatives have been commenced. In preschool and primary education, in July 1979, there were 124 primary schools in urban and rural communities in the Northern Territory. There were 1 or 2 outstations connected with Papunya and Yirrkala. Since then, the government has built an additional 32 primary schools. With the Commonwealth government's support, we have opened outstations at approximately 70 locations. 19 non-government schools, with substantial government assistance, have been opened. Enrolment has grown from 22 430 students to 24 547, an increase of about 13%. In 1981, the first year of the primary assessment program, the Territory functional illiteracy rate in urban areas was approximately 40%. It has been reduced to less than 20%, which is approximately the national average. Our resource provision overall in preschools and primary schools is the best in Australia.

Major developments have occurred in the following areas: school councils, including devolution packages to schools; curriculum uniformity throughout the Northern Territory and compatibility with the rest of Australia; provision of specialists in the field of teaching English as a second language; student and teacher exchange programs with Indonesia; computer education, in which the provision of resources is amongst the best in Australia; vacation schools with the Northern Territory University; programs for Year 6 and Year 7 students with special interests and talents; promotion of self-discipline for students in school; promotion of teacher development activities which are well ahead of those offered elsewhere in Australia; financial support to professional associations; increased participation in Northern Territory and national primary schools sporting events; and preschool and transitional policies which bring the primary years of schooling into line with the rest of the country. Primary and preschool education in the Northern Territory is something to be proud of. In terms of staffing and resources, we are among the best in Australia. Our facilities are extremely good. It is a record that the government can be proud of.

Mr Ede: Are you going to address any of the issues that I raised or aren't you? I am sitting here waiting patiently.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will get to the member for Stuart. There is a whole range of issues in relation to secondary education and in relation to tertiary education that I could touch on, but let me get to the member for Stuart, because really he is sticking to his normal form. His normal techniques are, first of all, to create a bogus issue through distortion. He does that on a regular basis. He tries to alarm the public and mislead the media with inaccurate information, and we had a beautiful example of that today, when we were talking about a particular amendment and the member for Stuart yelled out 'gag, gag' to the media, making a particular point that this government was attempting to stop debate. The debate continued for 3½ hours

after he had said that, but that is the sort of nonsense he carries on with. He creates confusion through misinformation and, as I have already mentioned, he does this regularly. All he does is knock, knock, knock. He attempts even to destroy confidence in the government's achievements in Aboriginal education by attacking the considerable achievements of those working in bilingual education, Aboriginal teacher education, and community education centres.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Stuart said that the people were moving away during the course of my consultations on Aboriginal education. In fact, it was only when the member for Stuart disappeared from the scene that people started to come and talk about the issues. I gave him the credit. I thought that he had gone to one of the outstations and had sent people in. Obviously, he did not do that. However, I can assure honourable members that the numbers did swell. We had a great discussion about bussing and all those issues which are of concern to the honourable member.

The member for Stuart read out a whole list of matters that are of concern to this government. They might not be of concern to the honourable member, even though he has a large Aboriginal constituency in his electorate, but he expects me to talk about all those issues to the Aboriginal people. The matters raised are responded to, in many cases in written form, by people in Aboriginal communities, and I also raise those issues when I visit. Despite what the member for Stuart says, there are issues that need to be addressed. They need to be addressed in an appropriate manner, which is what I am doing. I am not going to change because of the member for Stuart's comments.

His record really is abysmal. Let us look at the success stories he has tried to undermine and destabilise. There is a whole list of them. One, the Northern Territory University - knock, knock, knock ...

Mr Ede: It was my plan that you accepted. You were not going to run it that way at all.

Mr HARRIS: The whole issue - oh 'my plan'! The lean-to university!

Mr Ede: You took on the plan, the multifaceted plan.

Mr HARRIS: The lean-to university, Mr Deputy Speaker! How can we ever forget?

In terms of non-government education, we believe very strongly in supporting the non-government sector because it has a very important role to play. Kormilda College is a college which has had our support, and the member for Stuart knocks it. Through the colleges' legislation, we have supported greater autonomy for the colleges, and the opportunity to become more involved. On the issue of Batchelor College, the member for Stuart went knock, knock, knock. When we needed firm directions and decisions, this government gave those directions and decisions by means of a statement in this House. The member for Stuart just does not address the issues at all. I want his input. I want his comments.

Mr Ede: I gave certain information that you are going to have to look at. Every time I give you input, you misunderstand it and get it wrong.

Mr HARRIS: We need the opposition to act in a constructive manner and not a negative manner. Bilingual education, the Nt Open College and the CEC - again, knock, knock, knock. Then there is Yirara College ...

Mr Ede: Knock, knock, knock!

Mr HARRIS: I would like the honourable member to ask me a question about Yirara College because I can cover that very clearly.

Mr Ede: Okay, away you go. Let us hear it.

Mr HARRIS: I am not going to waste the few minutes I have left.

Mr Ede: We will give you an extension. Just answer the question.

Mr HARRIS: There is no need for me to get an extension of time, because I have answered every point you have raised.

Mr Ede: You have not answered any.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, when we have tried to get his support for a fair deal for the Northern Territory on crucial issues at the Commonwealth level, he has not delivered. We have seen another example today when he spoke about the dollars that were given in relation to the Aboriginal education policy. To get the dollars, I had to fight and make the comments I made. Originally, we were looking to receive \$4m. What did he say it is up to now?

Mr Ede: Rubbish, rubbish! \$8.1m

Mr HARRIS: What is it up to now? \$8.1m. That is pretty good, and I believe we have done reasonably well in that exercise ...

Mr Ede: \$8.1m. That is the amount he is putting up. But, unless you go in for the Northern Territory ...

A member: Could have got more ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members will speak through the Chair and not chat across the Chamber.

Mr HARRIS: I am not going to sell out the Northern Territory, just because a federal minister wants us ...

Mr Ede: You will lose the money.

Mr HARRIS: ... to agree with a policy. I have said I agree in principle with his policy. There is no question about that, and the member for Stuart will be interested to know that I have sent a letter today to the honourable minister. All right?

Mr Ede: Oh, thank you very much. That is good.

Mr HARRIS: But just remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, that we have to get the dollars - and soon...

Mr Ede: That was pretty close.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have answered all the questions. The Australian Teachers Federation carried out a survey in 1988, and that survey made it very clear that we have one of the best systems in Australia. That is a fact and that survey is available for the honourable member to read.

Mr Ede: You have not told us yet how many Aboriginal kids have got through your system.

Mr HARRIS: You just have a look and see the results.

The government has gone a long way in developing education, and the opposition's continual knocking of our performance on education is really a nonsense. Members opposite stand condemned for their approach because a great deal has happened and people will start to see through them in the very near future.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the Minister for Education almost convinced me. He has outlined an impressive list of achievements which have occurred since 1978, and no one disputes that. But, if the system is so good and things are going so swimmingly, why do we have so many bushfires?

Why do we have the situation at Yirara College, over which the minister finds himself in court; the situation at Sanderson High School, where parents, students and teachers have been under siege by the minister and the secretary of the department; the situation at Nhulunbuy, where teachers have resigned en masse; the situation at the NT Correspondence School, which is in chaos owing to the department's sudden announcement, without forewarning, that it is to be plunged into the TAFE system next year; and the situation at Batchelor College, where 17 out of 70 staff members have had a job offer for next year? Those are just a few of the problems, and my colleague the member for Stuart has referred to many others. If the system is so good, why is it in such turmoil? And why, if the system is so good, is the minister not out there defending it in the face of outrageous attacks like that we saw from Harvey Fewings in the newspaper a couple of weeks ago, and other attacks in the newspaper on the teachers at Driver High School? If it is such a good system, why is the minister not out there defending the practitioners in it? That is the question that needs to be answered by the honourable minister, and it is the question that he has not responded on.

As my contribution to this debate, I can do no better than read into the record an unsolicited letter that I have received. It comes from a parent who is not a teacher but a member of a school council, and it sets out what he believes to be the problems in the education system in the Northern Territory. I would ask the honourable minister to think about it carefully, because the points made in the letter are very valid indeed. He uses the same simile that my colleague the member for Stuart uses. He says: 'There are bushfires throughout the Northern Territory education system'. His letter continues: 'What has caused the bushfires? A department in which one hand does not know what the other is doing.' That is, the minister going in one direction and the secretary of the department going in the other, as was perfectly depicted in the Wicking cartoon last week and in last week's debate in this House about Sanderson High School. The letter goes on:

A government which, as usual, is out of touch and remote from what is happening on the ground; a government which does not know how to consult and whose senior bureaucrats do not know either, refusing to communicate with parent groups and teaching unions alike; a government which adopts a divide-and-rule mentality which inevitably produces hostility and resentment, such as in the minister's recent comments about senior secondary colleges not being happy with students from junior high schools.



Of course, Mr Deputy Speaker, the minister's claims were vigorously denied by the Chairman of the Casuarina Secondary College Council. Of course, the minister did not have the grace to apologise and of course he would not provide any evidence for his outrageous accusation. He would not say where he had obtained his impression, but was happy to let the record continue to state that he does not have confidence in what is happening in junior high schools. That is the minister's appalling indictment of his own education system, and that is what people are sick and tired of. They want a minister who has some confidence in the education system, because it is his system, and they want him to be prepared to stand up and defend it instead of walking away from it when things get tough. That is what people want to see.

Continuing on the subject of divide and rule, my correspondent asks: 'What next? Transition grades being unhappy with the standards of graduating preschoolers?' That is the sort of system the honourable minister is creating, a system in which one sector is set against another. He is doing that instead of attempting to bring it all together in a coherent whole so that parents and employers can have confidence in it. My correspondent continues: 'A government whose advisory bodies are largely appointed under ministerial control but which nevertheless ignores their advice when it does not suit the whim of the secretary'. As an example, he refers to the recent situation in relation to the Board of Studies and minimum continuous study times. We all know that the Board of Studies argued vigorously against minimum continuous study times and we all know that the board was overruled by the Secretary of the Department of Education and that the honourable minister, in turn, was overruled by the secretary, as we found out last week in the debate on Sanderson High School.

My correspondent continues, referring to 'A government whose stated directions concerning devolution are constantly contradicted by its own actions'. Of course, the Sanderson High School situation provides a perfect example. Under devolution, a school is given responsibility for certain key curriculum areas and, despite the fact that it can prove that its results are better than those anywhere else in the Northern Territory, that is not good enough for the department which considers that the school has to be sat on because it is not following the government line. Again, I quote:

A government which would bash teachers and parents rather than work with them in identifying and solving the problems. School councils, for example, are a vast potential resource in terms of providing the motive force in schools, as well as looking after the maintenance programs and the running of the school canteen. However, for the last 2 years, dating from the infamous efforts of the late unlamented and departed Ray Hanrahan, we have seen councils under siege whenever they do not toe the current ministerial or departmental line.

The situation has been continuing for 2 years and I must say that I had forgotten that particular point. There have been 2 years of non-stop bashing of school councils who step beyond the department line.

The problem was summed up in this exchange between a reporter and the Secretary of the Department of Education on the 7.30 Report item on Sanderson High School, and I am not talking about Sanderson High School in particular here but about an attitude being expressed by the most senior Department of Education bureaucrat. Dennis Driver said: 'What I cannot understand, if the system is working fine at Sanderson, while there is no evidence to suggest that it is not, why cannot they continue to operate like that? If there is such a high staff morale, a high student morale, and a high parental

parental involvement because of the way the school operates, why cannot they continue to operate like that?' The Secretary of the Department of Education replied: 'I do not think those things are the issues'. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will repeat that. He said: 'I do not think those things are the issues'. High staff morale, high student morale and high parental involvement are not the issues for the Secretary of the Department of Education.

What is the issue for the secretary? It is that, outmoded as they may be and inconsistent as they may be in terms of parental desires in particular schools, his wishes must be obeyed. And the honourable minister does not have the guts to sit on him, to say that he is wrong, and to say that the government has a genuine commitment to devolution, that devolution is important to it, and that devolution will take place even if the Secretary of the Department of Education does not like it.

That is the problem that we have and, as my correspondent goes on to say: 'It is also summed up in this comment from Frank Alcorta in last Saturday's NT News: "Once a decision is taken, presumably after careful consideration of all the options, the minister must ensure it is implemented".' My correspondent says that the problem is with the word 'presumably'. He goes on to say:

This government does not know how to consult. The minister is bereft in this area, despite the time he spends sitting on the ground in various communities, and so is his secretary. The minister is notorious for his habit of deluging people in gobbledegook once they make a critical comment or once they assume an attitude which he does not understand, which is most of the time. The department, deprived of ministerial leadership, pushes an agenda which it believes to be politically desired and, in doing so, rides roughshod over the community and the stakeholders in education time and time again.

Those are comments made by a concerned parent, a member of a school council somewhere in the Northern Territory. I would not dare be any more specific than that in case the honourable minister located him and started to take action against for him daring to express his opinion.

Mr Ede: He might find his name on the front page of the paper.

Mr SMITH: That is right. He might find his name on the front page of the paper again. It would be nice if, before these sittings ended, the honourable minister would give a categorical denial that he leaked the letter from Sanderson High School to the Board of Studies which ended up on the front page of the NT News. The minister is giving a sotto voce denial that he did it but let him give a categorical affirmation that his office did not do it either. That little episode has done enormous damage to the credibility of the minister and his office because people believe, rightly or wrongly, that the letter was leaked from his office.

Mr Deputy Speaker, what should be done? Let us be positive. My correspondent has suggestions about what should be done and let me read them into the record too.

There should be proper consultation with the wide community in setting desired curriculum end points, and flexibility to allow communities to develop their own most appropriate approach to reaching those end points.

That, Mr Deputy Speaker, is the theoretical position of this government but the practice falls far short of the theory.

There should be the development of consultative skills in the department. Consultation means more than producing documents behind closed doors on the 6th floor and then sending them out for comment with a predetermined agenda. That approach was a disaster with 'Towards the 90s' and will continue to be so until the government learns how to work with the stakeholders to identify areas of common concern and to develop a common approach.

There should be accountability of government to the community as well as the reverse. At a recent COGSO seminar in Darwin, school councils were told of the government's wish for them to produce 3-year school improvement plans. When a parent asked a departmental officer what would happen if a school went to a vast amount of trouble to do that, only to be faced with a sudden departmental policy change which would render the effort useless, the officer had no answer. Where is the department's 3-year plan? Where are the department's objectives and goals that it is prepared to develop and work towards over a 3-year period?

My correspondent goes on to say that a government which cares about education needs to lift parent and teacher morale.

It needs to be prepared to talk with representative bodies and unions rather than going straight to the trenches as soon as there is a hint of conflict. It needs to set up community-based programs to address the basics, using school councils as a resource rather than shutting them out of the educational side of things and saddling them with decisions about broken windows and attacks of army worms.

Mr Speaker, the honourable minister could do worse, in a quiet moment away from the heat of debate, than to have a look at that contribution made by a concerned parent in the education system in the Northern Territory, and to have a think about whether, in fact, those concerns might sum up the concerns of a considerable number of people involved with the education system in the Northern Territory. He might then ask himself why, if this is such a good system, we have people writing unsolicited letters like that. Why, if this is such a great system, do we have over a dozen bushfires all over the place at the moment, 1 or 2 of which might well result in industrial action and spoil the minister's perfect record before the next couple of weeks are out? That is the problem which this government has.

My last comment, of course, is that the government will not take any notice of this matter of public importance. It will not take any notice of my correspondent. It will not take any notice of my honourable colleague. It has a terminal disease called arrogance which means that it cannot and will not listen to what is going on out there. It will not consult. It does not listen to what people are saying. It does not heed the messages which people are giving it. It has a terminal disease and, as people are saying to me on an increasingly regular basis, in the street, the thing that will bring this government down is its arrogance. The minister's contribution to this debate is another perfect indication of the government's arrogance.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, we have had some glowing MPIs in this House and this one, of course, is par for the course. I say that because one of the components which was missing from the opposition's contribution was substance.

The Leader of the Opposition talks about arrogance. There is a form of arrogance which, when mixed with ignorance, creates one of the most destructive elements that I have seen in politics and in the community for some time. It is time that politicians on the opposition benches stopped involving themselves in educational matters and left them to the professionals. There has not been a single constructive element in any area of the opposition's participation in educational matters in the last 10 years. The current opposition spokesman on education matters is by far the worst that I have heard.

The opposition missed the point altogether, Mr Deputy Speaker. This MPI was supposed to be about inadequacies and lack of planning in the educational system, and those are its words, not mine. Thank goodness the Leader of the Opposition is no longer in the field of education. That is probably the only positive thing that the opposition has contributed to the education system in the Northern Territory. At least he has the good grace to acknowledge that the system is fine and that it works. He and his colleague dwelt upon what they called bushfires, none of which were substantiated.

Mr Ede: What do you want?

Mr FINCH: I will deal with some of the matters, none of which were substantiated, one by one.

This government stands on its track record in education. If members opposite stand back for a moment and drop their blinkered political viewpoint, they will see the achievements not only of this government but of this minister. The present Minister for Education is one of the most committed, caring, consulting ministers in Australian education.

Mr Ede: I said that he was a nice bloke. He just does not understand. It is a shame.

Mr FINCH: The Leader of the Opposition talked about all those raging bushfires, but he relied for his entire contribution on a letter which he had been sent by somebody out there in the community. That was the total basis of his argument. Where should we be going? What should we be planning? There was not one word in criticism of the system. The opposition says that there is grave concern in the community. That is true. Teachers, students and parents are concerned about the politicisation of education. Nobody wants to see the name of their school spread across the front page of the newspaper.

Mr Ede: Talk to your colleague, talk to your colleague.

Mr FINCH: The member for Stuart raises matters of leaked documents. Mr Deputy Speaker, let me throw some light on leaked documents. Some may not like this, but it is going to be said. At 10.15 am on 22 November, a letter was tabled in this Assembly by the member for Stuart. At 10.15 am approximately, the original of the letter, addressed to the Minister for Education, was delivered to his office across the road. That is atrocious.

Mr Ede: What?

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Education would not wish me to start any more fires out there but I can tell you that the delivery boy on behalf of those who wish to politicise this debate could be only 1 of 2 people, although there may be a few others.

Mr Ede: Quite a few.

Mr FINCH: Hang on. This letter was typed late on the previous afternoon. I guess that it was typed in the school office, signed by the chairman of the school council and delivered to the opposition on the same night. It was delivered to the supposed recipient at 10.15 am, a very good time, when the minister himself was on his feet in this House. It is shameful that the opposition spokesman participated in that.

Mr Ede: What are you saying?

Mr FINCH: He asked where the previous letter, the letter from Sanderson High to the Board of Studies, got dropped. Mr Deputy Speaker, I received a copy of that letter on 1 November. It could have been leaked to the newspaper by 1 of probably 1000 sources. I am aware of at least 1 case in which a person received 3 copies because of that person's role in different community groups or whatever.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, what I am saying is that these people on the opposite side of the House accuse the honourable minister of the leak ...

Mr Smith: And he won't deny it.

Mr FINCH: ... when thousands of copies of the letter were distributed, I dare say by the same person who distributed the second letter on the night before it was received by the minister. The networks work well, Mr Deputy Speaker, and for what purpose? To politicise a matter that was a non-event in the first place.

Mr Ede: You are saying that they put their own school on the front page of the newspaper.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The use of interjections on an infrequent basis is tolerated by the Chair but the continuous use of interjections will cease.

Mr FINCH: Let us get to the substance of the Sanderson High School dispute, Mr Deputy Speaker. Of course, the substance is that there was no dispute in the first place. The honourable minister has said many times in this House, and many times to the people involved, that they may continue with their vertical timetabling as is. He had 2 basic requirements. They were very simple. The first was that any student or parent who wanted continuous access to maths or English should have that opportunity. And why not? After all, already 95% or more of students voluntarily have 100% continuity in those subjects.

Mr Smith: No they do not.

Mr FINCH: They do. Over 95% of students do.

Mr Smith: They do not have 100% continuity at all. That is rubbish. They do more than the minimum that is prescribed. He does not even understand it.

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the second requirement of the minister was that the core should be completed. That was most reasonable. It was not an unreasonable request. Heaven forbid that the minister should not have an assurance, not just from Sanderson High but from every school, that that is happening, an assurance on behalf of the taxpayer, on behalf of the community, and on behalf of the users. The buck stops there. He simply wanted an assurance that it happens.

The opposition made great play, of course, about the autonomy of schools. It would have every school council doing its own thing.

Mr Ede: If that is what happens, why didn't you get up in the debate and talk about it?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, if that were the case and they were all private schools, the government might not be too concerned provided that they could show that they met the core and other basic requirements, and produced the results. Maybe it would be easy. We would not need an education department. We would not need a system that works.

Our education system, including our facilities and teachers, has been shown to work and has received the admiration of people in other places. The honourable members opposite talk in reverse whenever it suits them. One minute we have bad teachers and the next minute we have good teachers. We are proud of how far we have come during the past 10 years. It has been the result of quite deliberate planning and the deliberate injection of taxpayers' money. Who else would have made the bold move on the university? All of those things speak for themselves.

Nobody from the opposition talked about the system. They talked about nitpicking. They apologised for their federal colleague, Mr Dawkins, and the lack of effort of Hon Warren Snowdon and Senator Bob Collins in sticking up for Territorians. Here I go again, probably for the tenth time in these sittings, but all members on this side of the House and all Territorians are becoming a little tired of the lack of commitment and the performance of the Territory's federal Labor representatives. Members opposite want to go along and beat a drum at a special school council meeting when they think they can achieve a cheap line in the newspaper. Members on this side attend meeting after meeting, year after year, with school councils. We work constructively and productively with school councils, parents and teachers. Members on this side and, no doubt, members on the crossbenches achieve a great deal with their local school councils.

By his interjection earlier, the member for Wanguri displayed minimal support for his local school. His short political career is likely to last 15 or 18 months, depending on when the next election is. Members on this side of the House would probably achieve, month by month, as much as he will achieve in that time. What we do not do is debase the educational system, undermine the good work that is occurring, upset schools, upset students, upset teachers and upset parents. Members on this side have worked very fruitfully on helping to solve the concerns that the Sanderson council had - concerns that it need not have had in the first place if it had not been for the efforts of the ALP candidate in beating up this story.

When it comes to the question of staffing, Nhulunbuy and bush schools are cited time and time again. The packages announced by this government

yesterday will assist, but they are not the be-all and end-all. There are far more factors involved in people staying in remote areas than the superficial concern for dollars which the opposition focuses on. There are many factors. If the member for Stuart spoke to the teachers at Nhulunbuy, he would find that there are a couple of very deep-seated factors which have nothing to do with anything that he has raised. I suggest that he do his job constructively and take education off the front page of the newspapers, in the interest of the kids if of nobody else.

Let me talk about the facilities. I have had my kids in 3 different state education systems in Australia and there is no doubt in my mind that we are streets ahead here. That is recognised by everyone who comes here. The teacher student ratios and the performance are excellent. When you consider the size of our schools and the remoteness of some of our students, our record stands second to none. It is not simply a matter of chance or adhocery. It is all part of a deliberate planning process. We encourage students who need to study for tertiary qualifications interstate. We give them return air fares and employment when they return. We encourage them, Mr Deputy Speaker. What state in Australia does the sorts of things that the Northern Territory government has done? We have turned a dilapidated Commonwealth system into something that any state in Australia would be proud of.

It is a pity that opposition members do not get behind the system or, if they cannot do so, then say nothing. I think the honourable minister has been most generous in suggesting that the opposition spokesman on education should act constructively. Sadly, he has not done so to date and I doubt that he ever will. Perhaps, if there were a change in opposition shadow portfolios, we might see a different attitude. To date, the only positive contribution from the opposition benches in relation to education has been the resignation of the Leader of the Opposition from the system itself.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I would like to add a couple of comments.

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! This is an MPI. The opposition has had 2 speakers.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I have received the acknowledgement of the Chair. Standing orders allow for a 2-hour debate. There is absolutely no limitation on speaker numbers. I am rather surprised that the Minister for Transport and Works is so deplorably ignorant in that regard.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I would have thought that the member for MacDonnell would have accepted, if not standing orders, a convention in this House which existed since long before he arrived on the scene, that there be 2 speakers from each side on an MPI. This side of the House gave the courtesy of a 15-minute extension of time to the opposition's first speaker. I believe that we have been more than tolerant. Regardless of standing orders, the member for MacDonnell ought to be reasonable.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. However, I would remind the member for MacDonnell that there has been a gentlemen's agreement for many years that there would be 2 speakers from either side of the House on an MPI.

MOTION  
Orders of the Day

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that business of the day be now brought on.

Motion agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (POWERS AND PRIVILEGES) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 245)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

During the last sittings of this Assembly, we passed a bill to amend the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act. The principal purpose of that bill was to permit the Speaker to declare, by notice in the Gazette, interim accommodation for the Legislative Assembly as parliamentary precincts pending the construction of the new Parliament House. It is planned that, when the Legislative Assembly moves from the Chan Building to the new Parliament House, NCOM will occupy the Chan Building. In the meantime, it had been planned that part of NCOM would take up accommodation in the Leichhardt Building to alleviate the exceptionally cramped conditions in its present accommodation.

Recently, it has been drawn to the government's attention that it would be exceptionally costly for NCOM to move twice. Under these circumstances, discussions have been held, firstly with the Speaker and, secondly, with the New Parliament House Committee, with a view to locating a substantial part of NCOM in the area on the first floor of the Chan Building which was to be occupied by the Parliamentary Library. This has been agreed to by both the Speaker and the New Parliament House Committee. Consequently, the Parliamentary Library will be located on the top floor of the Chan Building and the Hansard and administration sections of the Department of the Legislative Assembly will be accommodated on the ground floor of the Leichhardt Building.

The purpose of this bill is to permit the Speaker to declare, at the appropriate time, not only the Chan Building but also the appropriate areas of the Leichhardt Building as parliamentary precincts. The bill also permits the Speaker to declare, by notice in the Gazette, part of the buildings to be occupied by the Assembly during construction of the new Parliament House not to be parliamentary precincts if that course of action is considered necessary because of occupancy by government organisations.

As the move to the Chan Building is planned to take place during the forthcoming parliamentary recess, at the appropriate time I intend to move for the suspension of standing orders to enable the bill to pass all stages at these sittings. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUPREME COURT AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 247)

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 deals with 3 things. First, it clarifies the relationship of the Full Court of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal. Secondly, it enables the Supreme Court to refer matters to the Local Court. Thirdly, it makes a minor statute law amendment.

The Supreme Court Act contains an anomaly. At first instance, a case may be heard by the Supreme Court being 1 judge, or by 3 judges, in which case it is called the Full Court of the Supreme Court. The act permits a civil appeal from a decision of the Supreme Court to the Court of Appeal. However, because the Supreme Court can mean 1 judge or the Full Court, theoretically the act permits an appeal from a decision of 3 judges, being the Full Court, to another, or even the same, 3 judges being the Court of Appeal. This anomaly does not exist anywhere else in Australia and was not intended. The Chief Justice has been consulted and supports an amendment excluding the possibility of such an appeal. Accordingly, clause 7 of the bill amends section 51 of the act to exclude such appeals. A person will have to appeal from a decision of a Full Court to the High Court. This is the position in the rest of Australia.

As a consequence of the new increased jurisdiction under the Local Court Act, clause 4 inserts a provision in the Supreme Court Act to permit the Supreme Court to refer matters within the new Local Court jurisdiction. This provision is in the present Local Court Act. It is to be repealed. It is more appropriate that it appear in the Supreme Court Act.

The bill also repeals references to the former section 16, which was repealed in 1987, and to the distinction between court and chambers which was also repealed in 1987. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

CRIMES VICTIMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE BILL  
(Serial 243)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to provide a legislative base for a Crime Victims Advisory Committee whose functions, outlined in clause 7 of the bill, will be: to advise the minister on matters affecting the interests of victims of crime; to investigate, report and make recommendations to the minister on matters referred to it by the minister; to disseminate information to the public relating to matters affecting the interests of victims of crime; to be a forum for the coordination of organisations and initiatives in the delivery of services to victims of crime including, but not limited to, services by the Territory; and such other functions as are imposed on it by the minister or by or under this or any other act.

In my criminal justice statement, which I delivered in this Assembly in the February sittings, I said: 'The government is going to examine ways of ensuring that the criminal justice system takes more account of victims' rights and difficulties'. This proposed legislation demonstrates the importance which the Territory government places on this undertaking to

improve services to victims of crime in the Territory. It may be argued by some that, technically, legislation is not necessary for such a committee to be established, and that may well be true. However, the government feels strongly that, on an issue of such importance to our community, it is appropriate that such a body be given statutory recognition. Put simply, the bill will enshrine in legislation this government's commitment to increase support for victims of crime.

The question of why a committee for victims of crime is necessary is probably best answered through the following example, and in this regard I am indebted to the work of Robert Reiff, an American psychologist. If a cyclone hit Darwin or there were a flood in Alice Springs, then the entire Territory, and perhaps the nation, would react immediately. However, crimes are inflicted on 1 individual at a time, through a number of different events occurring at different times throughout the Territory. Although in the Territory there would be more casualties due to crimes than there are casualties caused by natural disasters, the casualties of crime are less visible and less concentrated. This makes it more difficult for a collective response to be made. Further, the danger of being a victim of crime is continuous, persistent and widespread, while a natural disaster that endangers people in a relatively small area is episodic and of relatively short duration.

A permanent committee will ensure that the interests of those who have been described as the 'invisible victims' will not be forgotten. One of the first things that I shall be referring to the committee as a matter of urgency is the issue of victim impact statements, and again this is an issue which I addressed in my statement in February. In general terms, the government strongly supports the idea of providing more information to the courts on the impact that crimes, particularly crimes of violence, have on victims. The intention is to bring home to both the courts and the offenders the effects of crime on victims. In addition, victim impact statements would give courts more information on which to base restitution and reparation orders.

The South Australian model, under which particulars of injury, loss and damage must be provided to the courts in all cases except where the victim does not wish it to be done, has been praised in some quarters. However, some shortfalls in that system have also been observed and, before any system of victim impact statements is adopted in the Territory, there are a number of issues which I believe need careful analysis. I believe that there must be a much clearer idea of exactly what the objectives of any victim impact scheme should be. Under the South Australian scheme, these objectives seem somewhat sketchy, and superficial details are provided in all cases. It may be much more helpful to require that more detailed and meaningful information be provided in relation to fewer cases, perhaps where injury or loss is more serious. More importantly, the courts must be given clear guidelines as to the use that can be made of the information provided.

Suppose, for example, that 5 people of similar age are assaulted in similar circumstances and suffer similar injuries. The first victim happens to be able to cope with the trauma, and has no family responsibility. Suppose that the second is also able to cope with the trauma but has family responsibilities whilst, by contrast, the third and fourth victims are not able to cope with the trauma as well as the first and second victims, and the fifth victim declines to give any information at all, except such as is strictly necessary for the prosecution case. Suppose also that the first and second victims recover very quickly whilst the third and fourth do not.

In these circumstances, is the court to impose radically or significantly different sentences on the various offenders, depending on the effect their crimes had or continue to have on their victims, and the information their victim does or does not provide to the court? Should an offender be let off more lightly just because the victim recovered quickly, or did not provide detailed information to the court? Should the offender be dealt with more severely because the victim was not able to cope with the trauma as well as did other victims, remembering of course that, in the event of an assault on a child, an elderly person or a woman, the punishment will be more severe? What should the penalty be when the victim declines to provide information for a victim impact statement? Should sentencing of offenders be delayed until it is known with some certainty exactly what the effects of their crimes have been on the victims? Mr Speaker, these questions need to be answered in order to determine the objectives of any victim impact statement scheme.

There are also a number of other difficult issues involved in the implementation of any victim impact scheme. For example, differences of opinion exist as to who should be responsible for interviewing victims and providing information to the court. There are arguments both for and against using police, Correctional Services, or Department of Law officers. The extent of injury or damage has also to be fairly assessed. In this regard, differences of opinion will inevitably arise between the victim and the offender. The timing and method of resolving such disputes, including what standard of proof should apply - civil or criminal - can cause difficulty.

Some victims, very understandably, will not want to go through the trauma of giving evidence, perhaps for a second or third time, about their injuries or loss. Some may simply not want the offender to know what a difficult time they are having. These and other issues need to be carefully and sensitively addressed before any victim impact statement scheme is introduced, and the government believes that the best forum to address these issues is a committee consisting of people from all walks of life who have access to or who make decisions or take actions which affect victims of crime.

The government believes also that it is very important to ensure that the right sort of help gets to those who need it and at the appropriate time. This support may need to be provided very quickly. This is another matter which the committee will be asked to consider. Overseas studies suggest that, while individual victims of crime may have a multitude of worries and concerns, usually one concern only is uppermost in their minds. It may be financial, medical or psychological. A victim or member of the family may need urgent legal advice or simply someone to talk to. An ability to respond quickly to a victim's most pressing need can be of enormous help. The committee will be asked to address these issues, particularly recommendations concerning the establishment of a victims' support group which will be a priority.

Mention has been made already in this Assembly of the South Australian Victims of Crime Service. This is a service which was established in 1979 as a self-help group by parents of the Truro victims but which has, through the years, developed into a more sophisticated organisation which now has a full-time executive officer. Earlier this year, officers from my department and the NT Police Force visited South Australia and had discussions with a number of people, including the executive officer of the South Australian service. The Territory officers were impressed with the service, which has a number of functions, including providing emotional support and acting as an information centre. Also, I have had discussions with the South Australian Attorney-General, and I believe that such a service should be established in

the Northern Territory. However, as with victim impact statements, before such a service is introduced a number of key issues must be addressed. These include: whether there should be a separate service or whether it should be part of an existing service; if it is a separate service, what should its relationship be with other services; should the service provide professional help as well as emotional support and, if so, is there a potential for conflict between any help provided by the service and the patient's doctor, and can procedures be put in place to avoid this conflict; and, subject to the answers to the above, what is the best way to provide a service in the Northern Territory that is effective and cost-efficient?

Mr Speaker, a multi-disciplined committee, with representatives from existing counselling organisations, seems to be the most effective way to provide advice to government on these issues. It is also essential that existing and new programs in this area are independently monitored to assess whether they provide effective assistance to victims of crime.

Honourable members will be aware of amendments to the Crimes Compensation Act. I hope the committee will be able to monitor the operations of these amendments and any other initiatives taken by government in this area. It may well be that the committee will commission a survey of victims who have been through the system to see what improvements can be made. In particular, the committee will be asked to assess whether the new programs, be they administrative or legislative, are effective, and whether they really do assist victims to get on with their lives.

In dealing with victims, it is essential that the courts, the various government and independent agencies, the medical profession and the support groups all work together. Proper coordination is essential, and I believe the proposed committee will adequately fill this role.

Clause 4 of the bill outlines the membership of the proposed 11-member committee. In addition to the chairman, the committee is to consist of the heads of departments which have responsibilities in areas such as law, health and community services and correctional services. As honourable members will appreciate, these officers have responsibilities and implement policies which affect victims of crime. In addition, the private medical and legal professions are represented, because they too come in contact with victims of crime. Most importantly, the general public, all members of which are potential victims of crime, is to be represented, and I inform honourable members that it is my intention also that Aboriginal people, women and the elderly will be represented on the committee. It is not intended that the committee will operate at great cost to government. Those members of the committee who are not public servants will be paid sitting fees but, aside from that, the expenses should be minimal.

Mr Speaker, this government is committed to providing a better deal for victims of crime. However, we must ensure that our decisions and actions in achieving this aim are considered and balanced. This government wants to ensure that the right decisions are made in respect of victims, and that these decisions are sound in principle and not just instant responses to political pressures. The Crime Victims Advisory Committee will help to ensure that the right decisions are made and that victims of crime in the Northern Territory receive a better deal. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

CRIMINAL LAW (CONDITIONAL RELEASE OF OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 235)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr REED (Correctional Services): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This amending legislation is designed to address a number of issues that have surfaced since the Home Detention Scheme commenced operation in February 1988. I will outline the details of the required changes later. First, I would like to outline the progress of the Home Detention Scheme. No doubt, honourable members are aware of this unique sentencing alternative. It is unique in Australia because, to date, this is the only state or territory affording offenders the possibility of serving their total term of imprisonment at home. I stress this point because 2 states, Queensland and South Australia, have 'rear-end' home detention schemes. This government has referred to these schemes in the past as: 'Little more than quasi early-release schemes allowing prisons to release inmates through a back door'.

Mr Speaker, I believe the Northern Territory government has adopted a vastly superior scheme to the 'rear-end' programs. I further believe that New South Wales, currently developing its home detention program, reinforces that belief. After researching all forms of home detention currently operating in Australia and elsewhere, New South Wales is opting for the Territory model. To date, the results of the Northern Territory Home Detention Scheme speak for themselves. 104 home detention orders have been made since March 1988, 19 of which are currently in force. Of the remaining 85 orders, 77 offenders completed their terms of home detention successfully, while 8 offenders were sentenced to their original terms of imprisonment after their orders were revoked by the court following a serious breach. The success rate of completed orders is therefore 90%.

I would like to point out, however, that some 28 home detainees have appeared before the court after they have breached a condition of their orders; that is, a breach by way of consuming alcohol when not permitted to do so or by being absent from their premises, no matter how brief such an absence might be, without authorisation. It is important to note that such minor breaches have been dealt with by the court swiftly and as the legislation intended, namely with sufficient discretion to vary the order by either extending the period of home detention, as occurred in two-thirds of these cases, or severely admonishing the detainees, as in the remainder of the cases.

Moreover, the detainees have benefited from the process of appearing in court and, if given a second chance, have successfully completed their orders after such a scare. It appears that some of these customers need to see that the people administering the program are serious when they explain at the beginning of detention periods that, if a breach is committed, revocation will result.

Secondly, I am pleased to announce that electronic surveillance equipment is now available to the Home Detention Unit. Honourable members will remember that my predecessor, Don Dale, announced that the use of such techniques in the Northern Territory would be a viable option in the future. This scheme is now ready to operate effectively in the Northern Territory. The equipment, a monitoring device consisting of a verifying unit in the detainee's home,

attached to the telephone, and a wristlet or anklet worn by the offender and matching the encoded number of the verifier, is available and can be fully utilised as soon as the legislation can be amended. The computer equipment in the Home Detention Unit will identify the offender and confirm that he or she is at home. The monitoring equipment will assist the Home Detention Program by increasing the efficiency of the monitoring process, decreasing the cost for taxpayers of administering the program, and minimising intrusions into the lives of home detainees and their families. The equipment is a tool to further promote the effectiveness of the Home Detention Program, ensuring that available human resources are utilised at the optimum level.

Mr Speaker, the amendments currently before you are necessary, firstly to ensure that the operation of the program is in line with the intent of the home detention legislation assented to in November 1987, particularly in terms of offenders breaching their orders and, secondly, to accommodate the use of the newly installed monitoring devices, increasing the overall efficiency of the Territory Home Detention Scheme.

The proposed amendments have surfaced as a result of continued review and evaluation of both the program's operation and legislation. They have been designed to overcome the shortcomings that have been identified. The practical and progressive legislation of the Home Detention Scheme has provided the community with the wide-ranging benefits it intended to offer. The community has also recognised the Home Detention Scheme as the tough and rigorously enforced alternative to imprisonment it is intended to be. Reviews and evaluations of the scheme will continue to ensure that the home detention program is always highly effective. Mr Speaker, the proposed amendments are the results of that continual review process and I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS IN MOTOR VEHICLES  
AND OTHER GOODS BILL  
(Serial 224)

Continued from 30 August 1989.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, this legislation is the result of some incidents which have occurred in the Northern Territory to the cost of individual Territorians and also, as I understand it, to the cost of some other Australians.

Mr Speaker, at the outset I would like to assure the Assembly that the opposition supports the legislation. We did have some questions about the applications of this legislation across the borders of the Northern Territory which could have arisen as a consequence of particular transactions involving vehicles or goods which may have occurred across the borders of the Northern Territory.

We have been provided with a raft of amendments and I thank the honourable minister for his explanatory notes. It seems that, as much as is possible, the amendments come to grips with the problems in the legislation which the opposition foresaw. These amendments will allow the Register of Interests in Motor Vehicles and Other Goods to be linked directly with New South Wales. They will also allow flexibility to accept complementary legislation from other states as it becomes available. In other words, it will become an administrative detail.

Mr Speaker, this side of the House certainly supports the legislation. To that end, I have indicated to the honourable minister that the opposition is prepared to accept the amendments in toto in the committee stage. However, if honourable members have any questions about any part of the legislation, I am sure that I do not need to remind them of the adequate debating time available to this House. They can question any part of those amendments. However, I advise that the opposition will be accepting all of the amendments as they are presented.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the bill, and I know that you are aware, although I am not sure whether other honourable members are, that several years ago I was involved in a working party which looked into a raft of matters related to consumer affairs legislation. This bill relates to one of the matters considered by that working party and is a result of its investigations into possible ways in which vehicle encumbrances could be recognised and registered. I commend the Minister for Transport and Works and his departmental officers, who have had to deal with a matter of some complexity. Not the least of that complexity has been the provision of a legislative framework to provide necessary protection for Territorians.

Whilst in the past I have generally supported uniform, Australia-wide legislation, I have not necessarily been happy with much of the uniform legislation that has been proposed. I must say, however, that this particular legislation should certainly be uniform across Australia. Unfortunately, that is not the case at present. Whilst we are joining the New South Wales register and our legislation will work in conjunction with the New South Wales register, we are dealing only with a little over one-third of Australia's motor vehicles. Whilst this will provide quite a considerable amount of protection for Territorians by allowing them access to information about the interests registered in vehicles which are recorded in the New South Wales register and the Northern Territory register, comprehensive protection will only occur when a single register covers all states. In their travels elsewhere in Australia, and in their discussions interstate, honourable members should make that point. I am sure that a single register will be provided ultimately, but I would like to speed up the process as much as possible.

When the consumer affairs working party dealt with this matter, we reacted to specific registrations of complaint and interest from members of the public. That was particularly so in relation to motor vehicles. I am very pleased to see the way in which the legislation has been worded and that the scheme which we have embraced allows for a slightly wider registration of interest than that which applies only to motor vehicles. It allows for possible future arrangements for other registrations of interest over personal items such as boats and so forth.

Mr Speaker, as the minister pointed out in his second-reading speech and will probably elaborate on in closing this debate, the scheme has advanced from the stage it had reached when the first bill was introduced. There are now fairly solid guarantees of accuracy in searching the register for interest. A registration document can be provided which will guarantee that the transfer of interest in a vehicle can take place without an encumbrance within a 24-hour period, if a person wishes to pay for the certificate. The scheme now allows for an immediate response by phone, mail or electronic data, without a certificate if a person wishes, so that an immediate spot check can be carried out in respect of the vehicle being considered for purchase.

I am pleased that the legislation involves a minimum amount of intrusion into personal affairs. The only requirements in respect of the vehicle register are for the engine number and either the chassis number or the new vehicle identification number. There is no requirement for personal particulars other than the form of interest in the vehicle and the name of the person with whom the interest rests. That sits very well with me. I do not intend to hold the House up for much longer this evening. I know that an enormous amount of work has gone into this bill. I am extremely pleased that the opposition supports both the bill and the amendments which had to be added to mirror the New South Wales legislation. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support for the bill. It certainly has had a long gestation period and for some very good reasons, as I have explained in the House before. Officers of the department went to a great deal of pain and trouble in trying to establish which would be the most effective system to link into. I believe that we have chosen the right direction in terms of potential access, economic considerations and expediting the matter.

This is an unusual piece of legislation in that, at this very time, the New South Wales parliament is debating amendments to the New South Wales system. It is what one might call legislation in stereo. That would indicate that, in effect, the Territory has delivered the goods at the earliest possible time. Obviously, there was no point in us being ahead. Heaven forbid that New South Wales should throw out its legislation, but I do not want to consider that just at the moment.

I need to acknowledge the very generous support of New South Wales, including the people on the ground and the government itself. They have been most supportive. At present, the New South Wales computer system is being expanded to cater for the additional load required not only by ourselves and the ACT but by the growth in the New South Wales network itself. We have been given some fairly generous terms in respect of our entry into the system, which has been in a take-on period following some visits by the New South Wales people earlier in the year. Financiers are in the process of actually feeding into the system at the moment. We have given them some encouragement by providing a lower rate of fee for that period. From what I understand, things are moving along very well. I need to compliment the officers of the Department of Transport and Works, who have gone through a painstaking exercise.

I advise the House also that I raised the potential for a national scheme at ATAC. Such a scheme has been agreed to by all state ministers and the federal government and I am sure that we will see a move in that direction. That is all I need to say other than once again to thank honourable members for their support.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendments agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.



DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Mr Bernie Kilgariff

Mr SPEAKER: I draw honourable members' attention to the presence in the gallery of Mr Bernie Kilgariff, a former Speaker of this Legislative Assembly, and I would ask you to join with me in offering him a hearty welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

HIRE PURCHASE AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 231)

Continued from 18 October 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the Hire Purchase Amendment Bill is consequent on the bill that has just been passed by this House, the Registration of Interests in Motor Vehicles and Other Goods Bill. The importance of that particular bill has already been referred to and it is noted that the provisions in this particular bill are unexceptionable. The bill moves the notification provisions from the Hire Purchase Act to the new Register of Interests Act, and for those reasons the opposition is quite happy to support the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

CRIMES COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 206)

CRIMINAL LAW (CONDITIONAL RELEASE OF OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 207)

Continued from 25 May 1989.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the consideration of the Crimes Compensation Amendment Bill and public debate on the attendant issues have been of great concern to the opposition and to people in the Territory. I have no doubt, Mr Speaker, that you will recall the extraordinary performance of the Attorney-General, who was the subject of 2 censure motions during the last sittings because of his capacity to vary downwards the amounts of compensation awarded by the courts to victims of crimes. It is particularly interesting that, in today's deliberations, he has introduced a further bill in respect of the victims of crimes. I am not sure that he will ever be able to convince anybody again that he is fair dinkum about actually doing things for the victims of crime.

I believe that the opposition, through its relentless pursuit of the issues associated with the Crimes Compensation Amendment Bill, has done a great deal more in that respect. Whereas the general question of victims of crime is an issue of great importance to all people, and whilst the perception of the vulnerability of victims of crime is important, in the context of my comments on this bill I hope to be able to point out the direction in which the opposition would seek to move as well as making constructive comments on the bill and the attendant issues.

The chief result of the debates on motions to censure the Attorney-General for his behaviour with respect to the operation of the principal act as it now stands resulted in him caving in and accepting that there should not continue to be a capacity for the exercise of ministerial discretion. I believe that, in the context of this debate, it is appropriate to place on record the opposition's appreciation of his change of mind and, hopefully, his change of heart in that regard. As I indicated in previous debates, the opposition has believed for many years that ministerial discretion in that regard is quite inappropriate and, in Australian jurisdictions, extremely idiosyncratic. I am pleased to have been advised by the minister that he has moved, by way of an amendment that has now been circulated, to remove that discretion.

Before I proceed further in addressing the specific provisions of the bills before the House, I want to suggest a general approach to the question of how governments provide support for victims. I think that there are 2 issues here. One issue is that we should be looking broadly at the experience, not only in the Australian states but overseas and, secondly, to put it simply, we need to be very careful about scaremongering. It is very easy and it is cheap politics, if I might say that, to encourage people to be concerned about the possibility of becoming victims of crime. By and large, the statistics do not indicate that that should be a real fear. There is no doubt that there has been an increase in crimes of violence which appear to be entirely without motive, and that encourages innocent people to believe that they are in great danger. Equally, there is no doubt that crimes like the Hoddle Street massacre and the Queen Street Post Office killings were absolutely dreadful but those crimes, and concerns about them among the general population, need to be set in context.

I draw the attention of the honourable minister to the work being done by the National Committee on Violence and also to 2 reports, 1 from New South Wales and 1 from Victoria. Both reports refer to the fact that most perpetrators and victims of crimes of violence are known to each other and that motiveless or anonymous crime tends to be the exception. I believe that those of us in public life, leading debates of this nature, have a responsibility not to score cheap political points by raising people's anxiety so that we can be seen to be doing something. I just mention that in passing as something for the honourable minister to reflect on.

Incidentally, the 2 reports I refer to are available through the Parliamentary Library. The New South Wales report is from the New South Wales Task Force on Services for Victims of Crime. It deals with various issues including: current health and welfare services; community-based committees such as the Sexual Assault Committee, the Domestic Violence Committee and the Child Protection Council; and the role of statutory authorities like the Departments of Health and Community Services, Housing and so on. It covers also the work of the police and the courts, the availability of crisis care for victims of crime in that state, and so on. The report to the Victorian parliament on support services for victims of crime was produced by the Legal and Constitutional Committee of the Legislative Council in that state. I recommend that particular report and its comments on the issues.

I notice that, in introducing the Crime Victims Advisory Committee Bill, the minister made mention of victim impact statements. I believe that issues of that sort need to be addressed by the parliament and assessed in terms of their applicability in the states which have introduced them. I do not seek to preempt the debate on that bill but I cannot help being a little cynical about its introduction in this context, given the drubbing which the Attorney-General has received on the matters to which it relates. This Crimes

Compensation Amendment Bill was introduced back in May and has taken 6 months to see the light of day because of the extraordinary behaviour of the minister. In that context, some cynicism is justified in respect of the Crime Victims Advisory Committee Bill. Legislation of that sort, setting up a committee which will obviously require resources of various kinds, smacks to me of a political fix rather than a considered attempt to provide a Territory-based solution to what is obviously an issue of importance. I draw attention to the stark contrast between that approach and the approach taken by the 2 jurisdictions to which I have referred.

While I am on the matter of jurisdictions, I note that with the victims' assistance levy and some other issues, particularly with reference to Mr Ray Whitrod and the victim impact statements, the Attorney-General has taken a lead from the South Australian jurisdiction. However, I believe that we should be considering these issues in a broad context.

To turn to the principles involved in the Crimes Compensation Amendment Bill, there is the question of ceilings on payments. I have circulated an amendment which contends that the ceiling of \$20 000 that is included in the bill - and which will be increased to \$25 000 as a result of the pressure being placed on the government - is inadequate. I do not see why the maximum for payments under crimes compensation legislation should be lower in the Northern Territory than elsewhere. I am aware that the maximum in South Australia is lower than in the other 2 states concerned. I understand that, in South Australia, it was set at \$20 000 in 1987. In Victoria and New South Wales, the maximum has been set at \$50 000 and the opposition is of the view that the maximum in the Northern Territory should be \$50 000 as well. We do not believe that victims of crime in the Northern Territory should be any worse off than their counterparts in the states. In the committee stage, I will be arguing very vigorously for the appropriate increase in that regard.

The other major innovation in the Crimes Compensation Amendment Bill is the Victims' Assistance Fund. In Australian terms, this is a South Australian innovation although there are precedents for it elsewhere. In the United States, a variety of approaches have been used to collect funds for criminal injuries compensation schemes through fines and penalties. Most schemes in the United States are funded solely or in part from revenue from fines and penalties. Fine and penalty assessments come in a variety of forms. One approach is to assess convicted offenders with fixed penalties. In Connecticut, for example, a \$15 contribution for the criminal injuries compensation fund is assessed for certain motor vehicle and drink driving convictions. A \$20 contribution is assessed for all felony convictions. In Indiana, a \$15 contribution is assessed on more serious misdemeanours and all felonies but not on traffic violations. On the other hand, traffic fine revenues are the major source of funds in a number of states.

A second approach used in the United States of America is to assess a proportional surcharge on fines imposed. For example, in Delaware, a 10% surcharge is applied to all fines, penalties and forfeitures. Florida combines the fixed penalty approach by assessing \$10 additional court costs on offenders with the proportional charge approach by also assessing a 5% surcharge on all criminal penalties. The imposition of an additional monetary penalty is considered a fitting way for offenders to pay back part of their debt for violating society's laws and is a means of providing additional funding for criminal injuries compensation, thus allowing the maximum amount of compensation payable to be increased.

The contrary argument has to be weighed up in this context as well. In his second-reading speech, the minister made the point that the people who are guilty of crimes that do not involve victims arguably should not have to contribute to a victims' assistance fund. I think that argument has some merit but, on balance, the opposition is prepared to accept a victims' assistance fund. That is one more argument for an increase in the ceiling for crimes compensation payments. I point out to the Attorney-General and to the Treasurer that, in Victoria, these funds are paid out of Consolidated Revenue entirely. That jurisdiction has rejected the notion of people found guilty of committing victimless crimes being levied in that way. It does not have a victims' assistance fund and it does not levy offenders. It pays compensation from Consolidated Revenue but is still prepared to go to a maximum of \$50 000. In this context, we should be giving consideration to that proposal as well.

I have dealt already with the question of ministerial discretion. I welcome the change of heart of the government in deciding that ministerial discretion is inappropriate and I will not labour that point any further.

One other broad issue that I want to canvass before I deal with particular aspects of the bill relates to the question of time of payment. During the censure debates held in the last sittings, one of the issues that paled into insignificance beside the Attorney-General's callous decisions about victims of crime was the length of time taken for some of these people to be paid. Before those debates, I wrote to the Attorney-General asking him questions in respect of the different categories of claims. I asked him how many claims had been lodged, proceeded with and acted on during the previous 12-month period, how much money had been expended and on what basis the \$20 000 ceiling for future payments had been arrived at.

It took me some time to get a response to that letter, but on Monday I received a fulsome reply and an analysis of the crimes compensation cases that had been determined in Alice Springs and in Darwin. A number of interesting issues arise from that. For the benefit of members and others who may be interested in these issues, I will table those 2 documents. The figures that the minister gave me show that, during the calendar year of 1988, 46 claims were lodged. By comparison, this year to date, 30 claims have been lodged. The number of cases in which the court has ordered compensation was 25 in 1988, but only 5 in 1989. In 1988, 22 had been paid out. The figure for 1989 is a little unclear. There is an asterisk which indicates that 'payments on the outstanding matters are presently being processed'. I presume that, until 15 November, some payments had been made and that perhaps there is a typographical error here. I point out to the honourable Attorney-General that the way this reads at the moment ...

Mr SPEAKER: Typographical is the correct word. You are always correcting other speakers.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, you may interject in my speech at any time whatsoever. I apologise from the bottom of my bended knee for such an appalling lapse of taste.

Mr SPEAKER. I have been thinking that I will get such a serve tomorrow night that I might as well give you yours now.

Mr BELL: You thought you would get in first.

Mr Speaker, to return to my argument, it is questionable how many payments have been made this year and how many relate to claims from last year. As I

read down the list, it is obvious that there is a typographical error. When we come to the amount paid out during 1988, we see it was \$216 000. In 1989, this year, \$508 000 has been paid out to date. That suggests to me that, since only 30 claims have been lodged this year, as against 46 in the previous year, a fair swag of the amount paid out this year must relate to claims lodged in the previous year. I suggest that that is evidence that a considerable length of time is being taken to pay out these particular claims, and that is a matter of concern to me. I will just ask to keep these copies for now and I will table them before I complete my remarks.

The issue is the time lapse between the time the court makes its determination and the time payment is made. There is an old saying that justice deferred is justice denied. And I ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Will the honourable member seek leave to table the documents?

Mr BELL: I will do so shortly, Mr Speaker. I am having them copied. I would like them to be copied because these are the only ones I have.

Mr SPEAKER: And then you will seek leave, is that right?

Mr BELL: I will table them shortly.

As I say, it has been said that justice deferred is justice denied. This is particularly important in this area because, in the case of many of these crimes compensation payments, the actual amount of money cannot compensate and the importance of the payments is symbolic. The payment is important to the victim, not only for personal financial reasons but as a symbol. It represents the state saying: 'We are concerned about what has happened to you. We are prepared to make this gesture'. That gesture becomes somewhat soured if a considerable length of time expires before payment is made, and I point out to the honourable minister that what is envisaged in this legislation is that the payment from the court is to be effected as soon as practicable. I refer the honourable minister to his circulated amendment 95.23, which says that 'The Territory shall, as soon as practicable after the issue of an assistance certificate, pay the amount specified in the certificate'.

I would not make a point of this under ordinary circumstances but I believe that, given that the minister has been extremely dilatory in making these payments in the past and given their symbolic importance, the speed with which they are effected is important. I refer the honourable minister to the South Australian legislation. He has taken the South Australian legislation as his model for the victims' assistance fund and I suggest that, in this regard, he do so as well. Section 11 of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act of South Australia says: 'The Attorney-General shall, within 28 days of an order for compensation under this act being made, satisfy that order by payment from the general revenue of the state'. It is a statutory obligation. From the time of the determination, a period of 28 days is stipulated. I believe that an important principle is involved, and I indicate to the Attorney-General that I will be seeking to amend his amendment 95.23 as circulated to delete the words 'as soon as practicable' and insert 'within 28 days after the issue of an assistance certificate'.

While I am on that question of the Territory, and this is very much a parenthetical comment, I find the phraseology of this legislation a little unusual. For example, we read that 'The Territory shall ... pay the amount

specified in the certificate'. Seeing that reference to 'The Territory' in the course of researching this legislation, I must admit that I had a quiet chuckle to myself. I got the feeling that the Attorney-General had made such a mess of things and had had his fingers so badly burnt during the last sittings, that he was determined absolutely to expunge any reference to the minister responsible for this legislation from any possible clause in which it might occur. I would be very interested to see the drafting instruction that was sent across to the Department of Law, because I am pretty confident that it says: 'Please search this bill for references to the minister, and delete them wherever possible'. That has certainly happened. I am interested in that phrase 'The Territory'. It strikes me as unusual because one does not imagine that one would see in Queensland legislation, for example, a reference to 'Queensland shall pay the amount specified in the certificate'. Obviously, it is not an important issue and I simply mention it in passing.

The final broad issue I want to raise in this context is to query the change from compensation to assistance. I do not accept the necessity to change the title and the present wording in many sections of the bill and the raft of amendments that the Attorney-General has circulated. The logic of changing the term from 'compensation' to 'assistance' is curious. Presumably, compensation implies some completeness, some idea of full compensation. I do not believe that that is a necessary implication of the term 'compensation' and it certainly has not been a problem for any of the other Australian jurisdictions, so I really wonder why the minister and the government have felt it necessary to change this particular title. The idea of crimes compensation has come to be accepted. The idea that the minister referred to in his second-reading speech, that the only government which can provide a full entitlement to people is the Commonwealth government, is a curious one.

He quoted the Attorney-General of the day, Paul Everingham, saying that, ideally, all victims of crime should be fully compensated, but he noted that no state could fully compensate victims of crime, and he said that the Territory would have to take over what are really Commonwealth obligations, pursuant to Commonwealth social security legislation. That is an interesting argument, but I am not sure that it would be accepted generally, let alone by the Commonwealth government. The Commonwealth government, of course, provides a safety net through social security legislation, and a pretty grim safety net it is too for long-term recipients of social security benefits. Obviously, victims of crime would be eligible were they to be incapacitated, unable to work and so on, but I think that is essentially a peripheral issue.

I think that it is important to retain the concept of compensation, because I think that full compensation is a goal that we are aiming at. Let us bear in mind that we are not talking only about financial compensation. As the good book says, 'Man does not live by bread alone', and my view is that victims of crime require far more than purely financial support, as I said earlier, and for that reason I referred then to initiatives in other states. I think it is a shame that the Attorney-General has not garnered experience in this regard more widely than he appears to have done.

I mentioned before that I would table documents in respect of crimes compensation, a letter from the Attorney-General in respect of claims and his intentions with respect to these 2 bills, and an analysis of crimes compensation cases heard in Darwin and Alice Springs. Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table those documents.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I note that the Crimes Compensation Amendment Bill is the prime piece of legislation that we are debating here. I note also that we are amending the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Act because of particular aspects relating to the payment of the victims' assistance levy. Because I have concentrated so strongly on the crimes compensation legislation, I have not made any mention of the second bill before the House. I indicate that the opposition is prepared to support those particular amendments as well.

In conclusion, I remind the Attorney-General that we believe the ceiling for payments should be \$50 000. We support the Victims' Assistance Fund. We think that, quite appropriately, the Attorney-General succumbed to opposition argument and public pressure to remove the section 20 discretion which he has under the current act. We believe that there should be a statutory time limit. We believe also that there is a need for a more general consideration of services and an examination of those services in other states and overseas. I refer to the American experience with victims' assistance funds. I think that this Assembly should have before it all sorts of information in that regard. Finally, we think that it is a backward step to remove the word 'compensation' from this bill. I believe that the symbolic nature of this legislation and the general question of services to victims of crime is as important as the money involved.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I shall be very brief. I rise to put before the Attorney-General tonight a proposition in relation to the amount of compensation that ought to be paid to the victims of crime. The debate at the last sittings highlighted for all Territorians exactly what sort of crimes people suffer and what sort of difficulty they have in obtaining compensation. I would be the first to say that I agree with the minister that the Crimes Compensation Act cannot be a panacea for all the woes of people who are innocent victims of crime. It is a system that has been devised to help people who are suffering extreme difficulty and hardship. On the surface that would appear to be how the act is being administered.

The point that I would like to raise with the minister is this. When the level of compensation was first determined some 7 or 8 years ago, it was set at \$15 000, and it was generally felt that that was not an unreasonable amount of money and that people would watch carefully to see how the payments were administered. Quite obviously, in the awards that have been made over the years, not everybody has been paid the full amount of \$15 000. In fact, the full amount was paid in a minority of cases. If the parliament agrees that the \$15 000 determined in 1982 was fair as an amount to be paid, we ought to be reasonable and say that the purchasing power of the dollar has been at least halved in the last 8 years. The very minimum that the parliament ought to consider in this bill is an amount of \$30 000, simply to keep up with the spirit of the legislation that was passed at that time. I would ask the minister whether he would be prepared to consider setting a figure and indexing it at some amount that is likely to reflect annual inflation so that the compensation payments keep up with the costs of the day.

If we do not do that, every 7 or 8 years, we will get into a leapfrogging environment such as has been outlined by the member for MacDonnell tonight. He pointed out that some states are paying \$50 000 and suggested that we should also. Most members would agree that \$15 000 is a little on the light side, that the \$20 000 first offered by the minister was a bit mean, but that \$25 000 is probably getting closer to the mark. However, if we want to be honest and take into account the real level of inflation, the amount that we should be discussing for compensation tonight is about \$30 000. If we want

to be fair to the victims, the least we can do is to say that this legislation is unlikely to come back before the parliament in the next 5 to 8 years unless there are exceptional circumstances and, therefore, we should make some provision for indexing the compensation so that the courts who are making the awards and the victims of the crimes who are receiving compensation are at least keeping up with the rate of inflation.

If the honourable minister has some real difficulty with that, I would be interested to hear his view. If he would be prepared to accede to the proposition, I would be quite happy to have an amendment drafted or he could do it himself. However, I think that, in terms of simple equity, the amount of compensation ought to be reviewed and that the \$25 000 that is proposed is not satisfactory if it is not to be indexed.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I would like to cover a few matters that have been raised. In relation to the removal of the ministerial discretion in section 20, I certainly made it quite clear at the last sittings that I would be moving to do that. That will remove the need for the court to make a recommendation to the Attorney-General and for him to make an assessment and set an amount.

The member for MacDonnell expressed a personal view and a view of his party that the practice of having legislation requiring an assessment by a judge or a magistrate to be interpreted by a minister of government is wrong. If that is the case, I would like to point out to the honourable member that that is a legislative requirement in respect of land rights. A judge, the Aboriginal Land Commissioner, makes a recommendation to the minister who then makes an assessment. I would like to see some support for the removal of that discretion under the Land Rights Act if that is the philosophical argument that the member for MacDonnell would like to apply. Of course, the Planning Authority is not a court, but it refers matters to me. That is a different argument. The land rights recommendation involves a judge.

The member for MacDonnell said that the plight of victims was something that the government had just become interested in. Of course, the amendments to this act were foreshadowed by myself in February. As the member for Barkly pointed out, this government actually introduced the crimes compensation system some 7 years ago.

The member for MacDonnell claimed that the amount of \$50 000 would be appropriate because that is the figure used in some states. Also, the member for Barkly said that we have to raise our levels so that they are compatible with those in the states ...

Mr Tuxworth: I did not.

Mr MANZIE: Well, he pointed out that indexation should bring us to a level where we are at least compatible. You said all the states have a level of \$50 000. I know that you are talking about indexation, but you used the argument that the states have a ceiling of \$50 000.

Mr Tuxworth: The basis of my argument was that you started at \$15 000 ...

Mr MANZIE: I do not intend to enter into any sort of dialogue across the floor. However, I would like to point out that there are 2 states where the amount is set at \$50 000 - New South Wales and Victoria. The only state which currently operates a levy is South Australia and it has been doing so for 2 years. Its amount is set at \$20 000 maximum. The argument that our ceiling



should be higher because we have a levy does not match. South Australia made a decision that it would access the revenue raised by its levy and made a decision as to whether it was appropriate to raise the amount.

I certainly have no hesitation in giving an undertaking that, after assessing the operation of the levy, we will be able to monitor the amount that the fund raises and to see whether an increase in the amount is affordable. We are talking about trying to ensure that offenders contribute to compensation of victims. I think it is appropriate that the system reflects that. If we adopt the \$25 000 ceiling proposed by the government, we will be providing the second highest amount available in Australia. We are not talking about the Territory being measly. We are talking about the Territory paying the second highest amount as well as giving an undertaking that an assessment of the operation of the levy will be undertaken to determine whether an increase in the amount is affordable.

In relation to indexation, the argument put forward sounds like a good one, and most likely is. I suppose it could be extended to other areas. Perhaps we should index all fines.

Mr Tuxworth: There is probably a very good argument for that.

Mr MANZIE: Possibly we could index sentencing.

Mr Bell: Index sentencing?

Mr MANZIE: It might be well worth looking at.

The concept of indexation can be looked at but, at this stage, the government will look at the operation of the levy and ascertain whether we should increase the amount or possibly increase the levy rate.

The other matter raised by the member for MacDonnell related to the time taken in relation to the payment of the amounts set by the court. In many instances, these delays were caused by assessment of taxing of costs. I have been informed that there are actually no outstanding amounts left to be paid at present. We have made a change to the system. I have asked the Department of Law to look at options and variations in trying to increase the speed of payment. What will occur now is that the amount that is endorsed on the certificates will be paid immediately and the matter of costs will be settled at a later date when they are processed. I have given that instruction to the Department of Law and that is now the system in place.

Mr Bell: Just say that again.

Mr MANZIE: I am talking about the system of making immediate payment on the certificate provided by the court. Until now, the time taken to settle and the taxing of costs has been one of the time constraints. I am saying that payment in terms of the certificate will be made immediately.

The Department of Law has made arrangements with Treasury to enable electronic transfer of this payment directly to the trust funds of the legal firms involved in representing people. With the use of electronic fund transfers, we will probably be able to pay far more quickly than does any other jurisdiction. That is why I believe that the proposal to enshrine a time in legislation is not necessary. We will not be supporting that proposed amendment because the solution to the problem has been found in other ways.

Mr Speaker, I would like to point out that the amendments allow for compensation for injuries which are caused by offences involving motor vehicles, where such offences are covered by the Criminal Code. That would include a situation in which a motor car is used as a weapon in any offence of assault under the code. It would be appropriate that compensation could be considered in such a circumstance.

We have made a change also to raise the maximum compensation available for grief of spouses and parents to the same amount of \$3000. I do not believe that any other jurisdiction has such a provision. All the payments would involve maximum amounts because the advice is that the degree of grief is impossible to assess.

As I said, the ministerial discretion will be removed, and the maximum amount able to be specified in an assistance certificate is to be increased to \$25 000. If the member for MacDonnell likes to listen carefully, I will explain that, under the amendments proposed ...

Mr Bell: I always listen carefully to you, Daryl.

Mr MANZIE: ... applicants under the new regime could receive compensation payments which total more than \$50 000. In fact, the maximum amount which could possibly be available to a victim under this scheme would be \$53 000. I will give an example. If a husband and wife are shot by an armed robber and the husband dies but the wife recovers, the wife would be able to bring 3 separate applications: as a victim in her own right, as a dependant of a victim, and also for grief. If the maximum amount is assessed at \$25 000 for each of the applications for compensation as both a victim and a dependant of a victim, the woman would receive \$50 000. If the additional \$3000 for grief were allowed, the amount which could potentially be paid under those circumstances could rise to \$53 000. It is important to understand that.

It is also important to point out that the Victorian system promoted quite strongly by the member for MacDonnell has a series of caps, by way of ceilings for payments for pain and suffering, grief and various levels of trauma. A person would have to reach all the ceilings before receiving the maximum amount. If one of the ceilings was not reached, a victim would probably end up with less under that system than is available in the Territory. The maximum amount of \$25 000 is not cut and dried. Under certain circumstances, the maximum amount could be \$53 000 in the Territory. In terms of comparison with Victoria, the caps on certain areas make it rather like comparing apples and pears.

The system proposed by the government is, I believe, a marked improvement on the previous legislation. As the member for Barkly pointed out, time has moved on somewhat. As I stated very clearly in February, the government was concerned to provide greater recognition of the problems experienced by victims and this particular bill is a result of that concern. The bill and the proposed amendments will certainly allow an assessment of what we are doing and how we are doing it as well as addressing other issues involved in providing a package which recognises and responds to the needs of victims of crime. Mr Speaker, I commend the bills to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

In committee:

Crimes Compensation Amendment Bill (Serial 206):

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the Attorney-General has indicated that he is not prepared to accept that the term 'compensation' should not be abandoned. The opposition is strongly of the view that the term 'compensation' should be retained. This clause is the first occasion upon which it is proposed to remove the term and that bothers me, for the reasons which I explained during my second-reading speech. I will not take up the Assembly's time by rehearsing those arguments again. I advise that, as an indication of the seriousness with which the opposition views this particular issue, we will be dividing on this clause. We will not be dividing on this issue every time the word 'compensation' is replaced with 'assistance' but I believe that the point needs to be made. The word 'compensation' should be retained for the reasons I have outlined already. It is an important symbolic gesture to victims of crimes.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, can the minister repeat his justification for omitting the word 'compensation' and replacing it with 'assistance'?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the existing legislation cannot provide compensation. This bill is not about providing compensation. It is about providing assistance to victims. It is beyond the power of this bill to provide compensation. Indeed 'compensation' is a misnomer. It is inappropriate that a bill providing this sort of monetary assistance refer to that assistance as compensation. Insurance would provide total compensation. This is not a compensation proposal. If it were, I am sure that there would be many occasions on which even the amount of \$50 000 would be totally inadequate. To indicate that this bill is about compensation would be to give a false impression. It provides financial assistance to victims who have suffered the trauma of crime, and there are limits and ceilings on that assistance. It is inappropriate to call it compensation and that is the reason for the amendment.

Mr BELL: I simply point out once again to the Attorney-General that I think it is unfortunate that we are now to have a Crimes (Victims Assistance) Act in the terms of clause 5. That is extremely unfortunate, for the reasons I have already mentioned. Clearly, the Attorney-General speaks a different language to the one I speak. In my view, compensation may or may not involve or imply full compensation. I heartily agree with him that it would be very difficult for anybody fully to compensate any victim of crime. However, I believe that 'compensation' is the appropriate term. It is used in every other jurisdiction in this country and I do not see why the Northern Territory should not retain it.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I do not want to be obtuse with the Attorney-General, but what he said a moment ago was almost unbelievable. We have an act that has been called the Crimes Compensation Act for 7 or 8 years. People have been paid compensation under that act. Everybody involved in the administration of the act believed that they were paying compensation and claimants certainly believed that they were receiving compensation. Tonight, we find that it is not possible to have compensation any more. Because it can never be total compensation, it has to be financial assistance.

Mr Chairman, if anyone ever talked rubbish, the Attorney-General did so a few moments ago. If there is a legal reason or some other reason for changing the word 'compensation', it would be interesting to hear it. The reason just

put forward by the Attorney-General is arrant nonsense and I ask him again: what other reason is there for changing the word 'compensation' in the title?

The committee divided:

Ayes 12	Noes 8
Mr Coulter	Mr Bailey
Mr Finch	Mr Bell
Mr Firmin	Mr Ede
Mr Harris	Mr Floreani
Mr McCarthy	Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Manzie	Mr Smith
Mr Palmer	Mr Tipiloura
Mr Perron	Mr Tuxworth
Mr Poole	
Mr Reed	
Mr Setter	
Mr Vale	

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 95.1.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 7 and 8 agreed to.

Clause 9:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 95.2.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 95.3.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 10:

Mr MANZIE (by leave): Mr Chairman, I move amendments 95.4 to 95.8.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 10, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 11:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 95.9.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 11, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 12:

Mr MANZIE (by leave): Mr Chairman, I move amendments 95.10 to 95.13.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 12, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 13:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 95.14.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, may I ask the minister for an explanation concerning the impact of that amendment on the principal act?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, this amendment relates to offences under the Criminal Code. In other words, if an amount is to be paid to the victim, the offence has to be of a criminal nature. An assistance payment would not apply under this legislation if the matter were covered by the MACA legislation. It would apply if there were a victim of a criminal offence under the Criminal Code but not in respect of civil matters or other matters. It would not apply in respect of injuries arising from the use of a motor vehicle, provided that no offence under the Criminal Code was involved. If a person driving a motor vehicle intentionally runs down and kills or injures another person, assistance may be available under this legislation because that is an offence under the Criminal Code. On the other hand, a pedestrian injured in an ordinary accident, which did not involve criminal action, would not be eligible for assistance under this legislation. There has been an amendment in Victoria to clarify that problem.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, proposed new section 12 provides for circumstances in which people will not receive assistance. The current act says that, if there is injury or death involving a motor car, compensation is not available. This is a progressive amendment, if I might compliment the government. It means that, if a person is killed or injured as a result of criminal action involving a motor vehicle, compensation is able to be paid. The reference to the Criminal Code refers to an offender who has committed an offence under the Criminal Code. I do not recall the heading in the Criminal Code, but if you use a motor car to kill or injure somebody deliberately, that is a crime and you cop it. With the passage of this amendment, compensation which was not previously available will be available to the victims of such crimes.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman I move amendment 95.15.

This amendment will omit from proposed section 13(1)(a) the reference to an amount of \$20 000 and insert instead a reference to \$25 000. As I pointed out in my second-reading speech, this will make the amount payable under the Territory scheme the second highest amount available in Australia and, in fact, under certain circumstances people could receive maximum amounts of \$53 000.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the opposition is strongly of the view that the maximum must be increased, that there is no reason ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are you moving your amendment at this stage?

Mr BELL: I will come to that in a moment, Mr Chairman.

There is no reason why a victim of crime in the Northern Territory should not receive similar compensation to that available in jurisdictions elsewhere. As I said in my second-reading speech, I believe that the ceiling in South Australia will be increased in line with that which applies in other states.

Mr Collins: How do you know?

Mr BELL: For that reason, I intend to argue vigorously for the increase to \$50 000. To pick up the idiot interjection from ...

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

Mr BELL: To pick up the uninformed interjection ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member will withdraw the remark.

Mr BELL: I withdraw the term 'idiot' unreservedly, Mr Chairman. The uninformed comment from the member for Sadadeen about whether or not I would know about the future actions of the South Australian government was surprising, to say the least, since he did not take the trouble to sit in here and listen to the debate.

Mr Collins: I did. I heard you talk about that.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I believe it is appropriate for us to take the most recent interstate precedent. I do not believe that it is appropriate for the amount to remain as it is. Therefore, I move an amendment to the amendment to omit '\$25 000' and insert in its stead '\$50 000'.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I would like to pursue this matter with the Attorney-General for a moment. In his concluding remarks, he misrepresented the proposition that I put to him. I would like to go through it again. The minister suggested that I was advocating an increase in the level of compensation because some states were paying up to \$50 000. That was not the premise of my argument at all. In fact, I do not necessarily hold the view that, because some states are paying \$50 000, we should also be paying \$50 000. What I am arguing is, and I put it to the minister, if \$15 000 was a reasonable maximum in 1982, would the minister agree that, taking inflation into account, \$30 000 would be a reasonable maximum today? Does the minister believe that \$15 000 was a reasonable maximum in 1982? Perhaps we can start there. If the minister believes that \$15 000 was reasonable in 1982, it is only fair to assume that a reasonable amount today would be somewhere between \$27 000 and \$30 000. If it was reasonable in 1982, and nobody has put up an argument for its reduction, why should it be less than \$27 000 to \$30 000 today? Should victims of crime in 1989 receive a lesser amount than they would have received in 1982, simply because of the effluxion of time? If a figure of \$25 000 is set tonight, with no component for inflation, is it reasonable to assume that victims of crime in 1992 or 1994 will receive a lesser amount because time has passed them by, or are we going to be consistent, take inflation into account and make compensation payments that are fair to the claimants?

The minister cannot have it both ways. If he is prepared to concede that the inflation factor ought to be taken into account, let's do it fairly. If we are going to set an amount of \$27 000 to \$30 000, let us build in a factor that allows for that to increase as the years go by. If the minister will not contemplate anything like that under any circumstances, I would be interested to hear his view. Under those circumstances, I am quite happy to support the member for MacDonnell's proposition that an amount of \$50 000 be authorised. It will be a matter of time only before the rate of inflation eats away \$50 000. By setting a fixed amount now, and perhaps not considering this legislation again for another 8 or 10 years, we are putting at a disadvantage and being dreadfully unfair to all those people who will be compensated in the meantime. I do not believe that that is the purpose of the legislation. If that is what the minister is proposing, I would be interested to hear his views.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I would like to comment on the member for Barkly's theory. It sounds great but, obviously, he did not put it into practice when he had the opportunity to do so. Nor has any other jurisdiction done so. It is one of those things that sounds good but is not really practicable in the circumstances. However, I said quite clearly that there is no intention that this matter will be set in concrete for the next 7 or 8 years. The levy system, whereby offenders will be paying money towards providing assistance to victims, is new and we will assess it over the next couple of years to see what funds are raised and whether we can build up an amount of money which could be used to increase assistance to victims. That is what occurred in South Australia. A levy has been in place for a couple of years and I believe that that fund now has over \$1m in it.

What is proposed by the Territory government will be a greater amount than is paid in any Australian state, with 2 exceptions. It is incorrect to suggest that we are talking about a measly amount. We have introduced a levy system and we have given an undertaking to assess the impact of the system and to determine whether it will enable us to increase the amount payable in the near future. That is a sensible way to go about it and that is why the government has taken this step. I certainly hope that honourable members will support what the government is doing.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, what the Attorney-General is now saying is that the total amount that is likely to be paid will be dependent on this imaginary cash flow that is to come from the offenders' fines.

Mr Manzie: No, I said that before, but you were not listening.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, the Attorney-General is saying that there is a reduction in the amount of compensation able to be paid. That takes effect as of tonight, if the \$25 000 is passed, and the reduction would be in the order of ...

Mr Manzie: It is a 70% increase, but obviously you would not have the mathematical capability to work it out.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I would like to pick that interjection up. If the Attorney-General wants to reassure the people of the Northern Territory by telling them that he has increased the payment from \$15 000 to \$25 000, over a period of 8 years, and that they have had a 70% increase because inflation has not been taken into account, many will start to understand why the Territory is almost insolvent. That sort of mathematical formula is arrant nonsense. Mr Chairman, you would know that because you are pretty good with figures.

Mr Chairman, I say again that, as of tonight, claimants for compensation under the amended act will be at a considerable financial disadvantage when compared with those who received compensation in 1982. It is a question of formulating some way of compensating people for the inflation factor. Perhaps the minister is right. Perhaps we do not have a formula that takes account of inflation. Let us provide a sunset clause in respect of the ceiling for payments, so that the amount can be reviewed in several years time in the light of the prevailing circumstances.

For the Attorney-General to argue that, at the end of the day, the total amount of money available will be related to the amount collected through levies is really telling compensation claimants that they will not get much out of the government in the days ahead. Really, Mr Chairman, that is a crying shame. No one has argued that the \$15 000 allowed in 1982 was excessive. Some people would say that it was a bit light but seems to have worked well. We accepted it in 1982. Why not extrapolate that figure to 1989 and make provision for it into the 1990s? Why should we tell claimants that, as of tonight, they must take a cut in the maximum level of compensation available because the government does not know what sort of receipts it will get from its levy program? On balance, I believe that the proposition put forward by the member for MacDonnell is worthy of support.

The committee divided:

Ayes 8

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Ede  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura  
Mr Tuxworth

Noes 13

Mr Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Harris  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Vale

Amendment to amendment negatived.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MANZIE (by leave): Mr Chairman, I move amendments 95.16 to 95.20.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 13, as amended, agreed to.

New Clause 13A.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 95.21.

New clause 13A agreed to.

Clause 14:



Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 95.22.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 15 agreed to.

Clause 16:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I invite the defeat of clause 16.

Clause 16 negatived.

New clause 16:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 95.23.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the clause to be inserted says that 'The Territory shall, as soon as practicable after the issue of an assistance certificate, pay the amount specified in the certificate ... to the applicant'. In his second-reading speech, the Attorney-General made reference to some administrative changes that he had already set in train, and I would like to hear him talk about those again. I think he said that the problem of taxing costs was one of the delaying factors. That, of course, is a little cute because the other reason for the delay was because he was taking so long to read the transcripts of all these cases.

Since he is given to accepting the decisions of the courts in this regard, I would be interested to hear from him exactly what he meant when he said that victims would be paid immediately on the court's determination.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, what is intended is that the amount will be paid against the certificate issued by the court, with the matter of costs being settled later. When he was discussing this in the second-reading debate, the member for MacDonnell said that he would move an amendment requiring the payment to be made within 28 days. The government would have no problems with accepting an amendment to my amendment which removes the words 'as soon as practicable' and replaces them with 'within 28 days' in the proposed new section 20. The amendment would then read: 'The Territory shall, within 28 days after the issue of an assistance certificate, pay the amount specified in the certificate - (a) to the applicant; or (b) in accordance with any order made under section 8(8), as the case may be', with the addition of 'and as soon as practicable, pay such amount by way of costs and disbursements as is ordered by the court'.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Attorney-General may seek leave to move an amendment to his amendment.

Mr MANZIE (by leave): Mr Chairman, I move that amendment 95.23 be amended as follows: omit the words 'as soon as practicable' and insert in their stead 'within 28 days' and omit the words 'together with' and insert in their stead 'and as soon as practicable, pay'.

Amendment to the amendment agreed to.

Amendment, as amended, agreed to.

New clause 16, as amended, agreed to.

Remainder of bill:

Mr MANZIE (by leave): Mr Chairman, I move amendments 95.24 to 95.31.

Amendments agreed to.

Remainder of bill, as amended, agreed to.

Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Bill (Serial 207):

Clauses 1 to 4 agreed to.

Clause 5:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I invite defeat of clause 5 to remove the requirement that payment of the levy is a precondition to court ordered home detention, on the basis that there may be some offenders who would otherwise be eligible for home detention but who could not at that point of time pay the levy. The levy will still be imposed on those offenders who, in accordance with the scheme, will have to pay the levy or work it off through community service. It enables the community service order to be given under those circumstances.

Clause 5 negatived.

Clause 6:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I invite the defeat of clause 6.

Clause 6 negatived.

Remainder of bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bills reported; report adopted.

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

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Speaker, whilst I am on my feet, I would like to pay tribute to those communities in the Victoria River electorate which again did so well in the Territory Tidy Towns Competition. As I mentioned earlier today, it was my great pleasure to be involved, once again, in the presentation of the Territory Tidy Towns awards, which was held a week or so ago at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

Once again, the Victoria River electorate has done very well. I would like to go through some of the award winners and congratulate them individually. In category A, Wildman River Safari Camp won the best business project. The Timber Creek Health Centre won the award for the best health

centre. That is a credit to successive sisters at Timber Creek, and especially to Eddie and Margaret Vigants and Meredith Fogarty. These people have put a great deal of effort into keeping that health centre in excellent condition.

I would like also to pay tribute to the community councils which have won awards. Milikapiti on Melville Island won the best local government or community government project in category A. In category B, Dagaragu, adjacent to Kalkaringi in my electorate, won the best local government community government project. I should pay tribute to the community government council at Dagaragu. As honourable members would be aware, Dagaragu was established when Aboriginal people walked off Wave Hill Station. It was a great pleasure this year to welcome the community into the community government scheme. It has gone ahead in leaps and bounds and has done great things in improving the lifestyle and the beauty of that community on the banks of the Victoria River.

Pine Creek Police Station won the award for the best police station in category B. Once again, I congratulate successive police officers in the Pine Creek area who have developed and maintained the gardens. They keep the station in an excellent condition. In category B, Batchelor Area School won the best school project. Batchelor tends to win prizes virtually every year in Territory Tidy Towns. There is a great community effort there. The projects which have been undertaken over the years have been second to none. In category B, Nauiyu Nambiyu, Daly River, won the highly commended award. That would be the most attractive Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory. It is always well maintained. It is an excellent reminder that Aboriginal communities can be and often are equivalent to communities elsewhere in the way they are developed.

A special effort award in category B went to Batchelor. Batchelor has won the Territory Tidy Towns overall prize on 2 occasions - once in its own right and once in a shared capacity. This year, it has won a special effort award. I commend the people of Batchelor for that effort. The best local government community government project was won by the Jabiru town centre. Having been in Jabiru recently, I recognise the efforts that have been made and I commend the people involved.

Port Keats has had considerable bad publicity, much of it undeserved. It has received some undeserved criticism during the past few days and, in fact, this government has received undeserved criticism for its management of affairs at Port Keats. A highly commended award went to Port Keats this year in category C. I congratulate Port Keats on that because, as I said, it comes in for a lot of criticism. Many people think that Port Keats is not up to the standard of other communities. However, it is getting its act together and I believe it will be a contender for future Territory Tidy Towns awards.

The electorate did not win any awards in category D. It is very difficult to come up with a project in category D in my electorate. However, in category E, the award for the best health centre went to the Douglas/Daly area, where the government and other groups put in a great deal of effort in keeping the place looking nice. The Douglas/Daly Research Farm always looks spick and span.

The best government department statutory authority was won by a federal body which is located at Adelaide River. I refer to the federal War Graves Commission. I was there recently for the Remembrance Day celebrations and the Adelaide River War Cemetery is at its magnificent best right now. I commend successive curators for their efforts over the years.

Over many years, I have been a regular visitor to Montejinni Station. Certainly, in the last few years, it has been very obvious that a great deal of effort has been made to improve the appearance of the homestead area. The credit for that goes in particular to Julie Jansen. However, obviously John has put in a great deal of effort to assist Julie to do the things that have been done there. All of the facilities on the station have been improved. The staff have been provided with a tennis court and a cricket pitch is being developed for what will become an annual cricket match. I attended the first of those in the last month or so. It was strongly attended by members of the RAAF from Katherine. In fact, a couple of buses and a number of cars brought the people there. For a while, it was little a Tindal. Montejinni Station won the 5-year improvement award.

Two people in the electorate received individual effort awards this year. Of the 4 awards, 2 went to the Victoria River electorate. One went to Joyce Shaw from Pine Creek. Joyce has put a great deal of effort into Territory Tidy Towns over the years and that was recognised this year when she received an individual effort award. It was my pleasure to present that award to her. Also, I presented an award to Boyne Litchfield. Boyne has been in Batchelor since the very early days. He once lived on what is now Eva Valley Station. He and Glad now live in Batchelor. For many years, long before Territory Tidy Towns was even started, Boyne spent his spare time looking after the Rum Jungle lake area and he has continued to do that right up until today. He was a foundation member of the Territory Tidy Towns Committee. He has been involved in every meeting, in every working bee and in every activity. Boyne was a very deserving recipient of an individual effort award.

I will mention 2 other recipients of those awards. One was Lesley Oldfield, the Mayor of Alice Springs and the other George Thurmer from Brunette Downs Station. George picked up a number of prizes on that night and was clearly very much involved in the Territory Tidy Towns effort in that area.

The Borroloola community government council won a special recognition reward. I commend it for that effort. The council has been a great contributor to the lifestyle of Borroloola and no doubt its future efforts will build on this. I would like to commend the Jingili electorate for taking out the overall award. It was a first for an electorate to take out the overall award and I am extremely pleased to offer my congratulations to the member for Jingili who put in a great deal of effort.

Before I sit down, I commend the Territory Tidy Towns Committee, the Keep Australia Beautiful Council, Noel Foley and all of the people who are sponsors of the Territory Tidy Towns Awards. Their number is growing year by year. I commend them all for their efforts. We have shown clearly over the years that we do not need container deposit legislation to keep the Territory beautiful. All that is required is education and competition.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I wish also to raise matters relating to my electorate. First, I would like to recognise the efforts of a very vital group within my community who have undertaken as a major project the putting of coconuts back into Coconut Grove. We all know of the suburb of Coconut Grove, but we may not all know that it was officially named in 1952. No one is quite sure when the name first came into use. The name derived from a grove of coconuts on the coastal fringe that were planted before the war by the holders of early agricultural leases there. Coconut Grove Road existed as such until the new road was constructed as a bypass over Ludmilla Creek. The Northern Territory government changed the name of the road to Dick Ward Drive

in June 1980. In 1984, when separate suburban names were adopted, Coconut Grove was designated as a separate suburb within the town of Nightcliff.

The idea for a campaign to put coconuts back into Coconut Grove was originally put to me by a constituent, Ray Russell. As a result, I called a meeting of the residents in the area who were interested and things progressed from there. The residents' committee took on the job of examining a number of proposals to put coconuts back into Coconut Grove. Negotiations were conducted with the Department of Lands and Housing to develop Lot 4543 in Dick Ward Drive as a coconut grove. In fact, thanks to the Department of Lands and Housing and the honourable minister, a licence of occupation has been approved for 25 m along the front of this block and, on the weekend, the first coconut tree planting in the scheme took place along that 25 m frontage. About 60 people came to plant close to 150 coconut palms. It was a very impressive effort indeed. The coconut palms were donated by a broad range of people including 50 which, appropriately, were donated by the Territory Greens. A few coconut palms - I am not sure how many - were donated by the member for Koolpinyah. It was a real community effort.

As well as that, businesses became involved. Brian Hood of Darwin Irrigation Services contacted the residents and donated the necessary irrigation supplies to connect the water system. Geoff Benger of Lawn Mowing Services kindly donated machinery and labour to prepare the area for planting. Greening Australia, through the national tree program, is providing funding for 3 years to water the coconuts. It has been a great community effort and it has not stopped. The committee is extremely pleased with the response and I am sure that, after it has rested on its laurels for a couple of weeks, will be thinking of other ways of putting the coconuts back into Coconut Grove.

I would like to extend my particular congratulations to the following people who were very active members of the committee: Rosemary French, Fred Davis, Edna Holt, Ray Russell, Judith Ehling, Dawn Conroy, Else Funell and Kerry Howell, and for their determined effort in bringing this idea to fruition. Many other individuals, both from within Coconut Grove and from the greater area of Darwin, have given support to this project and their efforts are commendable. Lastly, I would like to thank my electorate secretary, Sonja Williams, who put in an incredible amount of work to ensure that the ideas kept flowing and the jobs were allocated.

Mr Speaker, the second thing I would like to do tonight is to congratulate Jape Furniture for the construction of its magnificent new showroom in my electorate. Most members will be aware that the official opening of the Jape Furniture Showroom will be on Friday 1 December. Jape Furniture has taken what was an eyesore in the electorate of Millner - a vacant block where a water slide was supposed to have been built but where nothing had taken place except the digging of a few ugly holes in the ground - and has turned it into a very modern furniture showroom complex. It has done this with a sensitive regard for nearby residents. Obviously, a construction project of that size presents difficulties for nearby residents. I put it on record that I found Alan Jape and his company most receptive to the problems that we put to him. The Japes did everything that they could to solve those problems whilst continuing their construction work.

I congratulate the Japes also on their sense of forward planning. Too often, organisations concentrate on the inside of the building and forget the surrounds, particularly the car parks. To their credit, the Japes started the revegetation process in the car parks well before the building started. The

car parks and the median strips are fully covered with shrubs and trees which certainly beautify what would otherwise be a bare expanse of asphalt and concrete. Through this exercise, the Japes have shown themselves to be extremely good corporate citizens. They are certainly a very welcome addition to the business scene in the Millner and Coconut Grove area and I wish them all the best in their business after the official opening.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to congratulate the winners in all categories of the Territory Tidy Towns Awards. It was unfortunate that I was not able to attend this year's award ceremony due to work commitments. In previous years, I have been able to attend the award presentations.

The matter that I wish to raise in tonight's debate concerns the situation in relation to housing funds and people living in Elliott. A meeting was held by the Aboriginal Town Camps Advisory Committee at Tennant Creek yesterday. The meeting was attended by representatives of Territory and federal government departments at Tennant Creek and it was a failure. The representatives from the Borroloola Council and the Gurungu Council of Elliott walked out, refusing to take part in the Town Camps Housing and Infrastructure Program at Tennant Creek yesterday.

Mr Speaker, as honourable members would be aware, I have always supported community government in Aboriginal communities, and I still do. It is a system that has the flexibility to allow people to take responsibility for their community as they see fit. Members on this side of the Assembly have always supported that concept. I have taken part in this form of government myself, as the Chairman of the Nguju Community Government Council, so I know what is involved. As the minister knows, I have always encouraged Aboriginal communities to consider this scheme as an option that might work for them, but I have always made it clear that it must be their decision, and theirs only.

Mr McCarthy: Are you sure that it is my friend? Be sure of your facts.

Mr TIPILOURA: I have always thought it was the minister's view.

Mr McCarthy: It is, and you know it.

Mr TIPILOURA: I still think that it is, but I have my doubts.

However, yesterday, in his reply to my question on the Gurungu Council it appeared that the minister had moved from this view. In his answer to my question, the minister said ...

Mr McCarthy: Come on. It was Tuxy's question.

Mr TIPILOURA: The minister said:

However, it must be remembered that the land on which they are going is privately owned. It is owned by Aboriginal people who can say that they do not want it to provide the services. If they do that, the council would be hard pressed to provide the services that it should provide for those people.

He recognises that the people for whom the \$3.5m has been allocated do not want the community government to look after the work.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have had various telephone conversations with representatives from the Gurungu Council and they are not too happy about their meeting with the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government and the Minister for Lands and Housing. They believe that they have been disadvantaged. They feel strongly that, for the last 2 years, they have been disadvantaged in respect of funding for housing in the communities of Elliott and Borroloola.

Mr McCarthy: That is because their housing association went broke.

Mr TIPILOURA: As the honourable minister has just indicated, the housing association went broke 2 years ago.

Mr McCarthy: It was close to 3 years ago.

Mr TIPILOURA: I told the people at Elliott that I will be going down there in the new year to have a look at the situation myself. I did not promise them that I would do anything about it, but I said that I would look into the matter and talk to the minister concerned.

As I said, the minister recognises that, because of this, the work must not be carried out. He recognises also that the people for whom the \$3.5m has been allocated want community government. I will tell the honourable minister that they have not said once that they do not like community government or that they are against community government. They support community government totally. They were behind community government from the start but community government is not working in their community and they think that they have been disadvantaged. I advise the honourable minister to go to Elliott and talk to the people again, and to try to come to some sort of agreement so that they can carry on with their work.

In his reply yesterday, the minister went on to say, in respect of Elliott and Borroloola, that 'The government's decision stands and community government will be responsible for TCHIP in those 2 communities'. This is not the self-determination that the minister is always talking about. The minister is always saying: 'Do it my way, or you will not get the services', and I am very disappointed by this attitude.

Mr McCarthy: What is happening at Bathurst Island, Stan?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will have a chance to reply.

Mr TIPILOURA: There is a difference between the Elliott Community Government Council and the Aboriginal housing association handling money for housing and services. The Aboriginal Community Housing Association and community governments are responsible for the same group of people and so, in many communities, the housing association has given way to the community government, especially when the same people are running the organisations. But, in Elliott, the housing association and the community government council have different responsibilities. In this community there is a large Aboriginal population, mainly living in the town camps, and a significant permanent white population which provides services to the town, pastoralists in the region and passing trade on the Stuart Highway. There is plenty of work for a community government to do without having to provide housing and services to a largely self-contained group who would prefer to have the work carried out in another way.

The minister is aware of the problem with the community government council, but both sections of the community work out their relationship with each other on the council. It is not the time to place another burden on them. Also, we must realise the effect that this amount of money will have on the work of the council. In 1988 and 1989, the council received \$53 168 as a local government grant and \$203 232 as an operating subsidy. I do not know what the total turnover was but I am sure that honourable members will see that \$3.5m will distort the efforts of the council considerably.

The main point here is that the Aboriginal people of Elliott want the money that is allocated for them to be administered by the Gurungu Association. The honourable minister agrees that that is the case but he ignores them. I call on the minister to review this decision and I ask that he not put more pressure on the Elliott community than is necessary. Recognising that the people of Elliott are making their own scheme for themselves and their future, he may find that his rather short-sighted attitude in imposing his will on them may undermine his long-term objectives. The people of Elliott want to run things themselves. They think they can do the job. The minister responsible and the Minister for Lands and Housing are not looking at the matter really seriously. I think they should do so and have another talk with the people. They drove all the way from Elliott last week in order to talk to the minister but they believe that it was a waste of time. They went back disappointed.

Mr McCarthy: It is a waste of time if you do not get your own way, I suppose.

Mr TIPILOURA: The minister's attitude is that the people do what the government says, or they do not get the money or the services.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, tonight I would like to canvass some problems that have been raised with me by a large number of people around the Top End with regard to the Buffalo Industry Assistance Scheme. Honourable members would be aware of the broad outline of the scheme, that loans of up to \$100 000 are available under it and that, provided certain conditions are met, those loans are convertible to grants after a period.

It is obvious that, where an attractive scheme like this is available, a large number of people will apply to participate and, of course, in the course of events, some people will miss out. That requires that parameters be set on the loans and that various conditions be imposed so as to ensure that the people who comply best with those conditions are those who get the loans. The scheme needs to be administered in a way which will ensure that the outcomes proposed in accordance with government policy are the actual outcomes which occur. Quite a number of people have come to me. Some are people who have been unsuccessful in applying for loans and others are ordinary people in the community who have said to me that there are quite a number of anomalies regarding the loans. I wrote to the minister in relation to 1 specific matter and received a reply from him. It concerned the loan granted to Carabao Exports.

The principal of Carabao Exports was, at that stage, the proprietor of Opium Creek Station. It was provided with a \$100 000 loan with the prospect of the loan being converted to a grant. That is fair enough and I am prepared to accept that the whole of the process was gone through with Carabao. It was believed at the time that it would be able to develop a very successful buffalo industry on its land and that that could lead to the conversion of the loan to a grant. That did not come about. I have heard various reasons for that, one being that the principal became very ill.



There appears to be an anomaly in that Carabao Exports was sold to the Sultan of Brunei. Now we have the anomalous situation in which the Northern Territory government has provided a soft loan of \$100 000 to a gentleman - for whom I have the very highest respect - who could probably buy and sell the Northern Territory 2 or 3 times over. We have provided him with a soft loan of \$100 000 which, on certain conditions, he can convert to a grant. If we are working on the basis of grants to the needy, and I am certain that that was one of the principles of the Buffalo Industry Assistance Scheme, one cannot rank the Sultan of Brunei as being one of the needy. It may be that we are giving him a grant of 5% of the available funds under our program and he will give 5% of the available funds under one of his programs. In that case, we might get quite a decent return on the investment.

I would like the honourable minister to advise the House of how the whole scheme works, and whether there is an ability to recover the money or whether it will remain as a loan to Carabao Exports under its new owners. Will normal commercial interest be payable on the loan? What is the situation?

The proprietor of Camp Creek Station is also a beneficiary under the Buffalo Industry Assistance Scheme. Camp Creek was put up for sale after the area was the subject of a proposal for Darwin's new dam. The proprietor moved on to Portion 3248. However, the map that I have, which is a Department of Lands Map CP4667, shows it as 1190 0o1loo CL(P93). The price is said to be in the vicinity of \$75 000 for the block. The person moved on and felled some timber, but then Theyona became vacant. Theyona is Portion 2534 on this map. The gentleman moved there on a 1-year lease which later became a 2-year lease. He carried out some very extensive fencing works which made many people wonder why he was going beyond the provisions of his lease which required him to carry out maintenance only.

A number of people are interested in buying Theyona because, along with the Vidlers' block, it is 1 of the 2 best blocks in the Douglas Daly. They were not particularly worried about the gentleman who was resident there because they knew that he had been unable to sell Camp Creek and had said that he would be unable fully to pay off Portion 3248, or 1190 as it is on this map. They did not think that he would become a serious contender to buy Theyona. They were surprised, however, when they heard that he had swapped the hilly area of Camp Creek for the unpaid portion of 3248.

I am told that that hilly area is to be attached to Litchfield Park. The Conservation Commission was quite open about it. It said that it really did not want the hilly area. It did not have any need for the land but the Northern Territory Land Corporation had offered it for nothing. Obviously, the Northern Territory Land Corporation was the vehicle for the swap of the hilly area of Camp Creek for the balance of portion 3248. The NTLC continues to pop up in various deals of this sort and honourable members opposite refuse continually to advise on any of its operations. It has come to the surface in relation to this matter and it would appear to be carrying out some instrument of government policy. I believe that that makes it answerable to the minister who is, in turn, answerable to this parliament.

The balance of Camp Creek, including the improved areas and the homestead, remain in the name of the original proprietor. However, it is now completely unstocked as the stock were all moved to Theyona. The individual who is the beneficiary of the \$100 000 loan, which is convertible to a grant, moved to another property, which he was in the process of buying, and moved from there to another property which he is leasing. The majority of the property which he used originally as a basis for obtaining the loan has been handed over to Litchfield Park and there are no stock on the area that is left.

Mr Speaker, you must admit that that is a very strange situation. The people who were interested in purchasing the property started to wonder whether they would get a chance to tender or even to attend an auction. When they chased this up with ADMA, the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries and the Department of Lands and Housing, it gradually became clear that the proprietor of Camp Creek would have a chance of obtaining Theyona on the basis that he had done a considerable amount of fencing work on the property. I do not know what price is being proposed but I am told that, at one stage, it was valued at \$400 000. I am told that the application has gone to the Minister for Lands and Housing. The proprietor, having obtained the \$100 000 loan, has sold half his station, bought a block in the Douglas Daly area, put his cattle on a third block, Theyona, and is now negotiating its purchase.

I want to know how this example fits with the terms of the Buffalo Industry Assistance Scheme in relation to the loans scheme. I want to know whether those loans can, in fact, be used to purchase land or to fence a property not owned by the individual concerned but leased by him. Also, I wish to know what the role of the NT Land Corporation is in this matter. What was it doing when it gave land, free of charge, to the Conservation Commission, and how much did we pay for it, remembering that the NTLC is funded through the Northern Territory budget?

Also, what of Theyona? What of the people who wanted to bid for that land or to tender? Why is it not open to the public? Or, is the Minister for Lands and Housing going to change his mind, reject the application that is currently before him, pass it back and put Theyona out for tender or for auction? Obviously, that would not be a bad thing to do.

I need those answers about the NTLC, the usage of buffalo loans and the sale of Theyona. It is something which people in those areas are very interested in. They want to know the answers and I would hope that, tonight or tomorrow night or at some stage during the balance of these sittings, the minister will provide me with that information, together with the procedures and guidelines for the Buffalo Industry Assistance Scheme and information on how the scheme has been negotiated.

I have the names of the people who have obtained the loans, and I must say that there have been more arguments amongst people in the industry about those than about any other issue that I have known, because people are extremely concerned when they hear stories such as this one gaining currency. I think that it would probably be best if the minister either agreed that such stories exist and tackled them to resolve the problems or, if he believes that my sources have informed me inaccurately, that he made a very clear statement concerning the actual situation.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the Assembly an Institute of Public Affairs document called 'Education: Pathways to Reform'. It gives the gist of a very important conference which was held in Sydney earlier this year. Dame Leonie Kramer was the conference chairman. She is the head of the IPA Education Unit, and is a lady of reputation who is highly regarded.

There is a tremendous amount of material in this document, but I want to talk briefly about 4 points which came out of the speech by Mr Kenneth Baker who was, at the time, the Secretary of State for Education and Science in the British government. His paper was entitled 'The British Government's Reform Program for Secondary Education'. Secondary education is the area which concerns me most in the Territory and, indeed, in Australia. There are

4 points which I will mention briefly without elaborating on them. I hope what I say may be sufficient to whet the appetites of honourable members and encourage them to look this document up and read not only Kenneth Baker's speech and the questions and answers section that follows it but also the comments of other eminent speakers.

He says that the British government saw the necessity for 4 key changes in secondary education. The first was the creation of a new statutory framework for a national curriculum which would be broad, balanced and relevant to pupils' needs at school and in adult life. No doubt that sounds a little airy-fairy, but I think the key point is that there was to be a national curriculum which would be applied to all schools across the country, a curriculum with clear objectives and national assessment at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16. Certainly, I strongly believe that there is a need for assessment at a far earlier stage than we have at the moment, and on a level which gives parents, in particular, and students a clear idea of how they fit in the scheme of things and how successful or otherwise they are. Such assessment also provides feedback information to teachers to let them know how they are measuring up. Right around the world, there seem to be some teachers who do not really want to know how well they are doing.

The second key point was enhancement of the principle of parental choice. This will bring a strong element of competition to the local authority monopoly of school education. Of course, it applies to the British system, where the local authorities have been totally in charge. There is choice. A school, with its council, can decide if it wants to pull out of the local education authority and go it on its own but, along with the parental choice, there is a strong policy that, whatever a school does, information about it must be easily available to parents so they can make judgments about schools and select a school of their choice for their children. As I have always said in this Assembly, it is vitally important that information on the performance of schools is clearly and easily available to parents so that they can make these judgments.

The third point concerns the delegation of financial and management responsibility from the hub of the education authority to the schools and colleges themselves, and that is something which is happening to a degree in the Territory.

I think the fourth point is quite important. It concerns the reform of initial and in-service training of teachers, coupled with a system of performance appraisal. To me, that says that teachers are inspected for their capacity to teach. Their capability to get the message across is appraised, from time to time, and I do not think that that is an unfair thing. I have been a teacher myself and I think it was fair enough that I was inspected. My teaching ability was brought under scrutiny because, as I also believe, the students are far more important than are the teachers. In our present system, the initial assessment of a teacher is made by his or her peers, and there is a tendency to believe that a poor teacher will improve with time and experience. Therefore, they are allowed to continue in the system. However, not all of them do improve, and it is the kids who suffer as a consequence. That occurs because no proper appraisal is undertaken of a teacher's ability and capability to teach children. It is not fair on the children, and really I believe it is not fair on the teacher himself, among other things. If he is not a good teacher, he would be far better off seeking another occupation.

There is one final comment I will mention, to whet the appetite of members who might like to have a look at the document concerning this conference,

which is called a watershed in education in Australia. I think honourable members would gain some benefit from reading about it, even if they do not agree. At least it gives something to think about in a very serious sense. I will finish with a comment which Kenneth Baker made about the way in which, until recently, the input of parents to the system was treated rather lightly. 'Up to now, the English Education Service has treated parents and governors rather like the Earl of Chesterfield treated women: "A man of sense only trifles with them, plays with them, humours them and flatters them, as he does with a sprightly, forward child; but he neither consults them about, nor trusts them with, serious matters".' Kenneth Baker went on to say that there were many sceptics about parental influence on school governing boards being raised to a pretty high level. He said that parents gave tremendous support when given real authority and responsibility in a school council situation. He believed that the parents rose to the occasion and treated the matter very seriously, and that positions as governors of school boards were sought after and competed for by parents in the community.

I think it was a bold step that the government took in looking at putting a high degree of faith and trust in parents and letting them know that their decisions would be key decisions made on behalf of the students of the school, which would have an impact and would be taken most seriously in the interests of the consumers of education, namely the students.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I would like to talk this evening about complaints that I have received from some of my constituents with regard to television 'ghosting' experienced in the northern suburbs of Darwin. Television ghosting occurs when the picture on television screens has an overlaid image, a double image.

This issue was raised during the Wanguri by-election and I can recall the member for Wanguri running off at the mouth about it during that time. He made a big play about it and tried to score a few points but, of course, since that election has come and gone, the honourable member has not said a word more about it. He seems to have forgotten about it.

I have done some research and, from what I can gather, it appears that the new TIO building on the corner of Herbert and Mitchell Streets has received most of the blame for this problem. It is, indeed, caused by the increasing number of high-rise buildings in the city centre. It appears that what happens is that the image transmitted to the northern suburbs is reflected off the high-rise buildings, doubling the picture on receiver sets in the northern suburbs. The problem is that, because one image is reflected and the other is deflected, a 'ghosting' effect eventuates.

I know it was suggested by Senator Collins that it was the responsibility of the Northern Territory government and the TIO to solve the problem. However, the reality is that the TIO building was subject to Town Planning Authority approval. The design was submitted and approved as a suitable building for the city centre, and when that had occurred the owners had carried out their responsibilities and met their obligations. I understand, however, that the installation of a couple of translators on 2 of the tall city buildings would solve the problem. Those translators cost about \$50 000 each and I think it is quite unreasonable to expect the owners of the buildings to instal them. We have a number of tall buildings in the inner city. Who would decide which of them would be the most appropriate location for a translator?

The responsibility for the transmission of television lies with the federal Department of Transport and Communications. The situation that has arisen in Darwin is no different from the situation that exists in all of the major cities around this country. All have high-rise buildings, and television transmitting towers are placed in appropriate locations so that this ghosting problem does not occur. In Brisbane, for example, the television transmitters are located on Mount Coot-tha, well above the city itself, and there is no problem whatsoever. In Darwin, the ABC is presently transmitting through a maze of high-rise buildings before its signal can reach the northern suburbs. Channel 8, situated at Gardens Hill, apparently has less of a problem than the ABC, but still it does have a problem.

I am saying that it is the responsibility of the Department of Transport and Communications. In one of his articles a few weeks ago, Senator Collins acted as an apologist for the federal government and the federal minister responsible, Hon Ros Kelly, saying that the blame lies with the owners of the building. In fact, he then laid the blame upon the Northern Territory government, saying that it was the authority responsible for solving the problem. That is not so.

I am aware that the Minister for Industries and Development has corresponded with Minister Kelly and asked her to take appropriate action. The federal minister has responded in terms similar to those in the article by Senator Collins. The federal minister agreed to send an expert to Darwin from Canberra. That person should have been here already to investigate and make recommendations. Regrettably, because of the pilots' dispute and the difficulties with air transport, it now appears unlikely that that person will arrive on site until early January. Mr Speaker, that is not good enough. Regular flights are coming to the Territory at the moment. There would be very little difficulty if that person were to fly to Darwin for a couple of days and then return. That could happen well before Christmas, but I understand that it will not occur.

In a press release of 29 September, the Minister for Industries and Development clarified the situation quite well. I would like to quote selectively from his press release:

The Territory government is calling a meeting of communication experts to resolve television reception problems in Darwin's northern suburbs. The Minister for Industries and Development, Hon Barry Coulter, said today the meeting should involve Telecom, Darwin's 2 television stations and the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Communications and the Northern Territory Department of Industries and Development. He said the task would be to examine the technical problems causing signal disturbance and determine actions to fix it.

Poor television reception in some areas of the northern suburbs has been caused largely by the growth of Darwin's central business district. There is a perception that this has been caused totally by a new building being constructed by the Territory Insurance Office in Mitchell Street. That is not the case because the problems existed before a brick was laid on that site although, certainly, the new TIO building has not helped the situation.

Mr Coulter said efforts by the federal Minister for Transport and Communications, Ms Ros Kelly, and Senator Bob Collins to shove the responsibility for the problem to the Northern Territory government

TIO were surprisingly naive. Surely they realise that, under Commonwealth legislation, the problem is totally a matter for the television stations concerned and the Commonwealth Department of Telecommunications.

There is no doubt that the Commonwealth department must take appropriate action and must take it as quickly as possible. My constituents and other citizens living in the northern suburbs are fed up to the teeth with poor television reception. It is beholden on the federal members, Senator Collins and Hon Warren Snowdon, to motivate the federal minister to take the appropriate action as quickly as possible.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, Shirley Blackman was and is qualified as a chiropractor. Several obstacles have been placed in the way of her practising as a chiropractor in the Northern Territory. I will give honourable members a brief account of the difficulties that Shirley Blackman has experienced. Mrs Blackman was offered a job as a chiropractor with an established Alice Springs chiropractor in February 1987. She applied for Territory registration, which was granted. I have here a letter from the Registrar of the Chiropractors Registration Board of the Northern Territory saying that it was pleased to offer Mrs Blackman registration. Yet, 3 months after she received that advice, the registration was withdrawn.

I have a letter here signed in June 1987 by Keith Fleming, the then Chairman of the Chiropractors Registration Board, saying that legal advice indicated that, in granting Mrs Blackman registration without sighting evidence that her qualifications were acceptable for membership of the Australian Chiropractors Association, the board had exceeded its discretionary powers and her registration was withdrawn. The Ombudsman took up her case. Apparently, he interceded with the Northern Territory government and was told that, because of the difficulties Mrs Blackman had suffered, she would be compensated with an ex-gratia payment of \$10 000. That was in July 1988. She wrote back to the Ombudsman accepting that offer. It took 6 months for the government to come to the decision. On 30 December 1988, Mrs Blackman was advised that the government had decided that she would receive an ex-gratia payment of only \$1644. Mr Speaker, I am sure that raises some doubt in your mind about the treatment Mrs Blackman, whom I should call Dr Blackman, received from the Northern Territory government, but that is not the end of the story.

She was advised that she should go back to the South Australian College of Chiropractors to sit for its exams which, she was told, would enable her to be registered as a chiropractor in the Northern Territory. She completed those exams but, unfortunately, the Northern Territory chiropractor requirements were changed in the meantime, affecting Mrs Blackman in spite of her South Australian credentials. I have copies of the registration that she has received from the Chiropractors Board of South Australia, dated 5 July 1989, indicating that she can practise in that state.

This is a very sad state of affairs, Mr Speaker. I draw it to the attention of the government in this adjournment debate in the hope that some resolution can be reached. Clearly, 2 issues are involved. Firstly, the Chiropractors Registration Board said that Mrs Blackman could work in the Northern Territory. There turned out to be some problem but compensation was granted. Subsequently, she made good her qualifications only to be told that the registration requirements had changed. As far as I am concerned, that is just not good enough. Some explanation is required from the Minister for Health and Community Services and the Treasurer as well, and I look forward to hearing from them in that regard.

A further matter of concern which has been drawn to my attention is the fate of the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate courses at Yirara College. There has been considerable concern in communities within my electorate, as well as among staff at the college, about the discontinuation of the JSSC at Yirara. I understand that news bulletins have stated that a writ has been taken out against the Minister for Education because he indicated that he would not be providing JSSC courses at Yirara next year.

I took the opportunity last week of being informed and briefed in detail by the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education in respect of the JSSC at Yirara and the proposed secondary TAFE courses. The issues which arose were twofold. First, the secretary and the deputy secretary expressed some concern in respect of the comparability of the Yirara JSSC certificate with the JSSC as awarded elsewhere. I am looking forward to pursuing that issue further. The second issue related to secondary TAFE courses. The adaptability of these courses is a laudable concept. The possibility of people being able to remain in the education system at any point in their secondary education, rather than having a cut-off point at a particular time, is a valuable innovation and I am satisfied that there is a great deal of merit in the concept of the secondary TAFE courses as they are being developed. They provide national accreditation, which means that completion of the courses will allow people to move into a variety of other courses in other institutions. However, I believe that the speed with which these secondary TAFE courses are being developed is a matter for concern.

I believe that JSSC courses should be allowed to continue alongside the TAFE courses. I have no reason to imagine that that would not be possible and I put it forward as a possible resolution to the difficulties that have arisen in respect of the situation at Yirara. In any case, the question of the implementation of the curriculum is a difficult one. The development of courses is often the easiest part of the pedagogic enterprise. The difficult part is to deliver them. It is important to ensure that, whatever courses are being taught, the human and physical resources are available to deliver them.

Finally, I wish to refer briefly to the extraordinary comments from the member for Sadadeen. I appreciate that he has his extreme right wing agenda to pursue, and he is most welcome to do so. However, when he uses the time of this Assembly to talk about educational issues, it is particularly interesting to me that he raises the question of the inspection of teachers. I find it quite extraordinary that he can support the idea of inspection in the way that he seems to envisage it. I want simply to place on record tonight my staunch opposition to many of the ideas that he has put forward. I will take the opportunity at some later stage to explain why I am so passionately opposed to inspection in the terms that the honourable member describes it, which provide for the opposite of constructive educational leadership.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, in closing the adjournment debate this evening, I would like to comment on some of the remarks of the member for Arafura. I would like to comment on the staged walk-out of the town camp organisations during a meeting with the Department of Lands and Housing yesterday. It needs to be made clear that the Town Camp Housing Infrastructure Program is a Territory program. \$18m of Territory funds and \$12m of Commonwealth funds are administered by the Northern Territory. The \$30m was set aside for the major communities. The \$3.5m referred to by the member for Arafura is an additional sum to that earlier agreed upon by the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory. It is dependent on the Commonwealth meeting its share of the funds. If it does not meet its share of the funds, I guess that it will not be available.

The Territory government's position is that, where community government exists, it is the appropriate body to handle the TCHIP funds. Both Elliott and Borroloola community government councils wish to administer the funds. Those councils have a majority of Aboriginal members, reflecting their numbers in the community. Gurungu and its Borroloola counterpart were established under the Commonwealth Aboriginal Councils and Associations legislation. Such organisations can cater only for their members and do not have the power of community government. People must be members of those associations to obtain benefits from them. However, prior to those councils being formed under Commonwealth legislation, the members of the community government councils were very supportive of the community government's role.

I have consistently urged the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to repeal the legislation referred to because it is no longer relevant. It was established as an interim measure until suitable local government legislation was in place in the Territory. This was clearly enunciated by the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs when delivering his second-reading speech on the legislation. He said that it would be repealed at such time as suitable local government legislation was in place. The present minister refuses to repeal the legislation and has collaborated with the land councils in establishing these organisations in an attempt to disrupt authentic local government.

Mr Speaker, I will give you a little bit of history. The housing association in Elliott went broke and has been defunct for approximately 3 years. It was funded primarily by Commonwealth agencies which have a history of poor supervision and reporting procedures bringing about such failures. On the other hand, community government has a very good history of management. My Office of Local Government has quite stringent reporting requirements. I am not prepared to be browbeaten on the pretext of an Aboriginal organisation wanting to do the job. I am not convinced even that there is a widely held view amongst Aboriginal residents of Elliott that Gurungu should handle TCHIP. Even if there were, the Minister for Lands and Housing and I have a very clear responsibility, in respect of the distribution of funds, to ensure that the Territory and, in this case, Aboriginal people, get the best value for money and that the required procedures are in place for the effective administration of funds. That will occur through community government. The Territory does not have to accept, and will not accept, the necessity for Aboriginal organisations to be formed under Commonwealth legislation when better legislation exists in the Territory to meet the needs of Aboriginal people.

I am surprised by the comments of the member for Arafura, considering the history of disruption at Nguuu, his home town, caused by outside advisers who would like nothing better than to destroy the power of the people, which was obtained through local government.

Mr Speaker, there have been veiled threats from the Gurungu organisation to the effect that, if it cannot administer the funds, no one will, and that it will lock local government out of the town camp. If that occurs, the only ones to suffer will be the people of those communities. It would be a pity if that were to occur.

I do not resile from my decision in any way. I will never be convinced that, just because people travel the long distance from Elliott to Darwin for a meeting with me, they should have their way. The fact is that I listened to them for an hour and a quarter and I know that the Minister for Lands and Housing listened for a similar amount of time. We argued the issues back and



forth and conceded that they had a role to play, but that it did not apply to the Town Camp Housing and Infrastructure Program. Nor do they have a place in terms of receiving ongoing funding from the Office of Local Government. Clearly, funding from the Office of Local Government will go to local government and local government alone.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Dondas took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITION  
Proposed Subdivision Lot No 3262 Lagoon Road

Mr COULTER (Palmerston): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 4 citizens of the Northern Territory requesting the Assembly to disallow a subdivision proposed for Lot 3262 Lagoon Road. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I do not propose that the petition be read, as it is similar in terms to a petition presented earlier in these sittings.

TABLED PAPER  
Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers  
Committee - Fourteenth Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I table the Fourteenth Report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee.

STATEMENT  
Territory Outlook for the 90s

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, from time to time, the people have a rightful expectation of their political leadership that, in a single speech, they will receive a snapshot which draws together the major threads of government policy and sets out the direction in which the government's policies will take us as a community. The closing hours of this, the last sittings of the Territory Legislative Assembly in the 1980s, is such a time.

The combined effect of what this government stands for will create 2 significant changes in how others view the Territory in the next decade. We stand at the doorstep of an era in which the Territory will become renowned as a vital regional economic partner among the nations to our north but, more importantly, it will also be the era of significant Territory contribution to our own nation. Every Territorian today creates export wealth at a rate 2.5 times the national per capita average, and that gap will widen in favour of our endeavours. In simple language, all Territorians will be able to say with a sense of purpose that, as Australians, they are among the most valued citizens.

The Northern Territory has travelled a great distance in this decade and it has been transformed from backwater status to a place where the best of lifestyles is available in the best of environments. Without the will to fight, without the will to strive for and defend Territory interests, none of this would have been possible. Today, Territorians have a justifiable pride in what has been accomplished. Today's Territory is a showplace of achievement, as the television program of that name illustrates to us each week. Irrespective of the national economic malaise, Territorians have reasons for hope, optimism and faith in the future. However, the story of the history of humanity is about adversity overcome and we in today's Territory are part of that universal story.

Our history records the fears engendered in our community about the value of accountable self-government in 1977-78, of how the Labor Party would have denied Territorians this basic democratic right, and still today about how the politics of the left maintain a stance of negative criticism on virtually every initiative by Territorians. What it persistently ignores is the adversity, the constraints and the hardship imposed on Territorians by a

federal Labor government which has consistently slashed our share of national tax income, deferred major projects such as the airport terminals for most of this decade, broken firm promises on projects like the railway, shelved new mining ventures, and decimated our tourism industry, firstly through an inability to solve the pilots' dispute and, secondly, by holding out the hope of financial support to operators and then failing to deliver it. Territorians have come to know well the sweet words of Territory Labor, and of our Labor representatives in Canberra and how, when you are forced to wait, that sweetness sours into an acid which eats into enterprise and rusts out hope.

During the Western Australian election in early February this year, our Prime Minister assured the nation that interest rates would go down. In the 10 months since that promise was made, every Australian, every Territorian, has come to know full well just how far from the mark he was. The banks now say that we will continue to suffer the highest interest rates in the western world for at least another 6 months, and possibly longer.

Those who should know believe that our airlines will not approach pre-dispute scheduling until after Easter and, meanwhile, our national economic managers are presiding over a blow-out in foreign debt which has led to the down-rating of our nation by global financial services and a tax regime which destroys incentive. Today's federal government is the highest-taxing government in Australia's history and every second wage earner is now paying the top marginal rates, and they know it every pay day.

Measured against all of this, one might conclude that the Territory's 156 000 people have little cause for hope and no cause for optimism. Certainly, that would be so if they placed their faith in the negative political alternative to my government which postures and prances on so-called social justice issues but would deny Territorians the earning capacity to pay the taxes which pay the bills for its socialist dreams. My government's goals are driven by the need to encourage more people to put a lifetime stake in the Territory, to serve the needs of every Territorian and to give this place the reputation and the reality of having a positive future. This is our public trust and the duty that we daily discharge. We strive for every Territorian to share in the great challenges and opportunities which lie ahead for our dynamic part of Australia.

Our home loans and tax policies are designed to encourage home ownership, population growth and expansion of the wealth-creating private sector. Our taxation regime compares more than favourably with the rest of the nation, with state-like taxes and fees 18% below the 6-state average and household taxes and charges 2.8% below the average. The impact of these policies is beyond argument. Since 1978, the Territory's population has risen by 42%, the private sector work force has grown by 98% and over 10 000 households have been assisted through generous home loan, sale and subsidy schemes, increasing the rate of home ownership from 28% to 44%.

In the October sittings of the Assembly, I detailed the commitment of the CLP administration to pursue our record of advancing the lifestyle and economic needs of Aboriginal Territorians, and to assist their growing involvement in the pattern of modern economic life. Even that most ardent of our critics, the usually wrong Warren Snowdon MHR, conceded in the publication 'Local Government News', in May of this year that the 'Territory has done a better job in the area of Aboriginal affairs than any other state'. Over 11 years, this government has outlaid, in 1989 dollars, an estimated \$130 000 for each Aboriginal Territorian for housing, health, essential services,

education, training, local government and support for Aboriginal culture, an amount 83% higher per capita than expenditure on non-Aboriginal Territorians. Basic infrastructure costs are high but I am of the firm view that, by the close of the 1990s decade, Aboriginal Territorians will be deeply involved in our economy. The tag of dependency will be removed and, among Australian Aboriginals, they will stand the tallest by virtue of being in charge of their own destiny.

The goodwill and mutual trust now evidenced between many Aboriginal Territorians and my government has been among the more positive achievements of recent years. The positive response by Aboriginal Territorians to self-management in their communities and the shared management of resources such as the Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) and Gurig (Cobourg) National Parks are signposts for the future. They are signposts which show that Aboriginal Territorians have become disenchanted with those who sow the politics of discord and a recognition that my government is a government for all Territorians, no matter where they live.

It is also a government which involves local people in local affairs, a government which gives Territorians a direct say at grassroots level. The consultative process is there in our numerous advisory councils. The devolution of responsibilities to school councils gives parents a say in education and the third tier of government, local government, which was in its infancy in 1978, now gives more than 90% of Territorians access to municipal or community government councils. With a further 18 communities now considering proposals for community councils, I am confident that, during the early 1990s, we will approach 100% Territorian involvement in participatory local government. This philosophy of involving Territorians at grassroots level had its roots in the Country Liberal Party's earliest battles - our demand for the right of Territorians to have a say in their own affairs, the cornerstone in our fight for self-government.

As the Territory's own home-grown political party, owing no allegiance or debt to distant policy makers, the CLP has proven to be the best for the Territory simply because it is 100% Territorian in outlook. Anything less than total commitment to Territory needs and interests compounds our disadvantages of distance, small population and the century of neglect which preceded the grant of self-government in 1978. We have all witnessed the accuracy of this observation since 1983, with a Labor government in Canberra intent on taking the wind out of the Territory's economic sails aided by a Territory Labor Party which has preferred to defend its southern masters rather than to defend the interests of Territorians.

As we end this decade, it is a matter of some regret to me that Territory politics have not matured to the point where we have a bipartisan position on the important question of our constitutional evolution. Territory Labor has yet to learn the lesson of resentment that it built for itself back in 1977-78 when it turned its back on Territory democratic rights. As 1989 draws to a close, we are still waiting for the first sign of support from Territory Labor for my government's proposals, put to Canberra earlier this year, to complete the transfer of powers process, giving Territorians the same administrative rights over their own affairs as those enjoyed by other Australians. The major difference between the CLP and the ALP has always been that the CLP has always believed that Territorians can stand on their own 2 feet. The ALP, by its actions and its historic record, would have kept Territorians in a baby pen and, like an over-protective parent, denied them the ability to explore their full potential. That potential, here in the Territory, is dramatic.

Our per capita exports, at 2.5 times the national average, mean that, if the contribution by Territorians were equalled by the rest of the nation, we would not have a national debt. The nation's net foreign debt is now \$110 000m. In the time it takes to deliver this speech, it will have risen by almost \$1m. The Territory wishes to increase its contribution towards eroding this national disgrace and we will do so, despite Labor's no to Coronation Hill and despite Labor's no to a sensible and rational, national uranium policy. Billions of dollars of valuable export income has been locked away, but I remain confident that economic sanity will eventually prevail in Canberra and that these vital mines will receive the green light to proceed with the high degree of environmental consciousness required by my government. The cycle of mining and energy development in the 1990s will make it the Territory's decade of contribution to national export earnings and national energy needs.

In the decade now drawing to a close, annual Territory mineral production has passed the \$1000m mark. That is a growth of 580% since 1978, expressed in 1989 dollar values, and oil and gas production has come from a base of zero to \$392m. That is just a start. The Timor Sea, now producing oil at one-third the rate of Bass Strait, will become Australia's premier oil-producing basin in the new decade. The Timor Gap region will be subjected to vigorous exploration, with Darwin as the technical base, and critical decisions will be made about the big Bonaparte Gulf natural gas field. Darwin will become a major regional gas and oil exploration base. New industries will consider establishing here using natural gas as a primary source material. There will be a gas pipeline to Gove and, possibly, extensions of the pipeline network into Queensland and South Australia. Expansion of the Territory power grid will enhance the economies of electricity production and, during the 1990s, as demand on our system grows and the production economies come into play, there will be consequent cost benefits for every consumer.

There are promising prospects for new mines. Near Katherine, the EIS for the rich Mt Todd joint venture which has the potential to be a world league goldmine is due for completion in the second quarter of 1990. By April next year, the Mt Bunday iron ore mine is expected to be exporting ore through Darwin following a supply agreement signed last week for 800 000 t to China. In January, commissioning of the White Range goldmine is expected and other goldmines at Rustlers Roost and Union Reef are likely to proceed. The Territory will maintain its position as a major world producer of bauxite and manganese and, before the year 2000, production economies could well see the giant McArthur River silver, lead and zinc deposit in production. The addition of Coronation Hill, Jabiluka and Koongarra would see the Territory's current mining, oil and gas industry easily attain multi-billion dollar status in annual production values.

The new decade will see the Territory assume a new dimension in regional affairs as our future intertwines more closely with the vibrant economies to our north. Darwin's location and the shrinkage of distance, through the innovation of modern communications technology, provide the prospect for our capital to evolve into a service centre in the professions, including law, accountancy, medicine, engineering, design and architecture.

It is within the realms of possibility that some Asian-based trading and investment houses in the new decade may consider Darwin as a suitable alternative base from which to administer their regional assets. The relatively high and accelerating costs of maintaining a substantial corporate presence in most Asian capitals, coupled with the doubts about their own future among many Hong Kong-based companies, makes this a real possibility.

Student exchanges, now a feature of our education system, are but one initial step in this process. Because of language and social familiarity, the new generations of business leaders and professionals will move more easily within each other's communities. Education is an economic enterprise and today's Territory has set the pace for the states in Australia's regional relationships.

Trade, tourism and major project developments are accomplishing the long-term policy laid down by this government in 1978 to seek mutual areas for economic cooperation between the Territory and our northern neighbours. It has gone beyond government, with many Territory businesses now having established contact networks which grow daily. The regional significance of our port will increase because of this government's parallel investment decisions to expand port capacity and to develop the industries which put export cargo into the containers and general cargo vessels which berth here. In the last decade, Territory exports have grown from \$170m in the first year of self-government to be worth some \$850m today. The take-off in our manufacturing sector, combined with our mineral exports and expanding output in primary production and fisheries, will see this export total increase many times by the year 2000.

The Hong Kong trade expo and the months and years of advance work have opened up the vista of new jobs and new skill opportunities for Territorians in the Trade Development Zone. Before 1995, we expect the manufacturing work force at the zone to reach 6000 and the vast majority of new employees will be Territorians. In the new decade, the initial emphasis on textile manufacture in the zone will broaden and, within days, we will be announcing details of the latest participant, a precision engineering firm.

Among the production success stories of the last decade has been our horticultural industry. It has escalated in value from a mere \$800 000 to around \$15m today. The total value of our primary production in livestock, crops and fisheries has soared from around \$40m in 1978 to \$240m today. Territorians are capable of achieving that growth again in the new decade because, in coming years, we will add production from the infant cashew nut industry which will move into its commercial phase, as well as output from barramundi aquaculture following the full operational success of our pilot hatchery.

We have also made steady progress towards the establishment of a kenaf-based pulp and paper industry on which a commercial decision will be made in the early 1990s. The first steps have been made to establish a date industry in central Australia and the outlook for expanding the Centre's grape crop is more than promising.

Brucellosis has been eradicated in the Northern Territory and, by 1992, the national deadline for eradicating tuberculosis, our pastoral industry will be in the position of having secure long-term access to vital export markets.

The 1990s will be a decade of promise for Territorians on the land. The Territory's position as a net exporter will be further enhanced by construction of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway connecting the Top End with the national rail freight network. In my view, this remains the single most important project for Territory development and I reaffirm my government's commitment to seek to have it built through a mix of private sector and Commonwealth investment.

We may not have the rail link yet but, in 10 years, vast resources have been allocated to our land, air and sea transport infrastructure. The modern port of Darwin can now cater for virtually any type of vessel. Barge and boat ramps service isolated communities around the coastline. Over 40 remote airstrips have been upgraded and this government has built high-standard airports at Tennant Creek and Yulara complementing those in other areas. Today, we have 5700 km of sealed road in the Territory and the total replacement value of all Territory roads is now estimated at \$3000m as a result of a systematic program to expand, maintain and rehabilitate the poor road system inherited from the Commonwealth in 1978.

We remain hopeful that, by mid-1991, the Commonwealth will have completed redevelopment work at Darwin and Alice Springs Airports, some 9 years after the Prime Minister matched the federal coalition's promise. Revelations of a further 3 months delay in a construction start at Darwin, however, add to the cynicism within our tourist industry about the quality of our federal Labor representation.

The national standard upgrade of the Victoria Highway is an important goal for the Territory government into the 1990s as is the extension and maintenance of roads which service remote communities and the tourism, mining and pastoral industries. The loop road connecting Yulara with Kings Canyon and the West MacDonnells and completion of the seal on the Kakadu Highway are 2 such projects.

Tourism is vital to the employment future of many Territorians because it is the only industry which offers jobs in virtually every corner of the Territory. In the last decade, direct tourism industry employment has soared from 1200 jobs to some 10 000 before the pilots' dispute, including 3000 Aboriginal Territorians. Assuming we get our air services back to normal and our new air terminals, tourism employment is expected to double to 20 000 by the year 2000. We have recorded a 200% increase in the number of hotel and motel beds from 4500 in 1978 to 13 400 today. The forecast increase for the next decade is an additional 11 000 beds. During the 1990s, government ownership involvement in the hotel industry will be relinquished as the industry strengthens further and the Sheraton and Yulara assets become sought after by private sector investors.

The annual income derived from tourist expenditure is now in the order of \$400m, but every Territorian is aware of how this vital industry has been rocked on its heels by a dispute in which it has been the innocent victim. We are now in the fourth month and I am yet to hear one solid plea from Territory Labor to its masters in Canberra to resolve what has been a major crisis.

Our tourism infrastructure and my government's commitment to develop the recreational lifestyle for which the Territory is now famous includes the work of our renowned Conservation Commission. Parks and reserves under management by the Territory Conservation Commission now exceed 50 in number, plus an additional 34 conservation areas. In the 1990s, the commission will add the West MacDonnells Ranges National Park and the Gregory National Park in the Victoria River District to its bank of Territory assets. We expect that, with a full transfer of powers from the Commonwealth, the commission will also assume its rightful role as manager of both Uluru and Kakadu National Parks.

In health and education, the major expenditure portfolios in every Territory budget since 1978, this government not only has met the rising demand for services caused by our 42% population growth, but has improved them and is geared to meet the challenge of new demands as the Territory continues

its new economic expansion. The Territory's health professionals have provided services which have outstripped what was available from the Commonwealth before 1978 and put those services to shame. The Menzies School of Health Research, a government initiative, has brought world credentials to the Territory as a centre for specialist excellence and the Territory University, a 1980 CLP election pledge, has added to our education credentials.

Naturally enough, there were no university students in the Territory in 1978. Today, there are 2400 and, by the year 2000, we forecast the enrolment will reach 6000. Total student numbers at all levels of education are an accurate indicator of how the Territory has been transformed. Today's student population in schools, TAFE and the university exceeds 40 000. That is a 75% increase on the 1978 enrolment.

The 1990s will be a decade with similarities to the one now passing, a decade of balanced development, conservation of our natural assets and enhancement of our lifestyle. Territorians recognise that, and they know that our policies have created the 3000 jobs a year for each of the past 10 years needed to sustain our population growth. But this new decade will have something else. It will see the Territory take on a new dimension in regional affairs in trade, manufacturing, export and educational business exchange. It will be the decade when the rest of this country begins to acknowledge that Australia needs the Territory to prosper, because our growth will vitally assist the nation in the twin needs for energy and export earnings. Despite the gloom in some quarters down south, despite our treatment from Canberra in recent years, and despite our handful of local knockers and whingers, my CLP government and its supporters are positive that the past 10 years have built a solid platform from which to launch the best decade in the Territory's often maligned history. Territorians today are the equal of anyone. They are about to earn national recognition as being among the most valued of citizens.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I do not intend to spend much time addressing my remarks to the comments made by the Chief Minister. Essentially, his statement recognises that we have had a bright recent past since 1978 and that we have a bright future. I concur with the broad directions and the broad possibilities that have been outlined by the Chief Minister. The major failing of the statement, however, is that it does not recognise that the present is not bright, that the glow which we had in the late 1970s and the early 1980s has basically disappeared and that there are serious concerns in the community about the future. Those concerns of the business community and the population in general have not been addressed. We have a situation in which our population has been decreasing or, if not decreasing, remaining stable. In fact, the population figures released yesterday demonstrate that once again. There was no growth in the Territory's population in the 12 months up to June 1989 and, in the Darwin area, there was a small fall. Of course, the significant thing is that, whilst there is a considerable natural population increase within the Northern Territory, we are still losing many more people than we are gaining from interstate. I thought that the Chief Minister might have addressed that matter in his statement.

The statement does not tell us how we are to get out of the economic downturn that we are now in, and how we will head towards what we all recognise as a promised land. There will be incredible and exciting opportunities in the 1990s, but they are not up for grabs. They have to be worked at. They have to be achieved through hard work and hard decisions by everybody in the Northern Territory.



Let me go into a little more detail about what this statement says. It says that we are proud of our results in the initial stages of development when funds were unlimited. I agree that the period from 1978 through to the mid-1980s was an exciting time for people in the Northern Territory. I agree that the Country Liberal Party government did seize the mood of the Territory and did provide it with very capable leadership. It also left us with some problems, the most important of which is the legacy of racial tension developed by the Country Liberal Party government. That is the major blight on the record of the Country Liberal Party government in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For its own selfish political purposes, it purposely raised racial tensions in the Northern Territory. The results of that will have to be tackled in the 1990s, getting rid of those racial tensions in order to allow all people in this community to achieve to their maximum potential.

In the Chief Minister's statement, the government takes credit for private companies recognising opportunities for development of the Territory's natural resources. That is fine. We also see what has been a constant refrain of the Country Liberal Party government - bagging the federal government as the traditional excuse for things going bad. The interesting thing is that people no longer buy that excuse in the Northern Territory. They now realise that the Country Liberal Party government itself has things to answer for and that it cannot continue to hide behind the skirts of federal governments. That perception is becoming more and more widespread in the community and is one of the very solid reasons why political attitudes are changing very rapidly.

The statement again recycles some old press releases and promises of major developments and I hope that the promises come true. However, it fails to provide us with any indication of how a Country Liberal government will achieve its stated ends. Once again, we have a wish list without any sense that the government knows how it will go about achieving that wish list and how it will go about bringing additional jobs and improving our lifestyle in the Northern Territory. As I have said before, it fails to address the current concerns of people who want to know what will happen to the economy next year.

The statement leaves out many things. On reading it, you would not realise that there are 15 000 people in the Northern Territory Public Service who might consider that they have a future in the 1990s and a role in improving the Northern Territory and its economy. They are not mentioned. The statement contains no meaningful discussion about what sort of lifestyle we want or what the people of the Northern Territory might see as a desirable way for the Territory to develop. There is no mention of the importance of regional centres in the Northern Territory nor of the particular opportunities that might be available for them.

Enough of that, Mr Speaker. It is not a time to be overly critical. It is a time to be positive because we are at the end of the 1980s and we are looking down the barrel of the 1990s. It is time for both parties to put their best foot forward and to say what sort of society they want to see in the Northern Territory of the 1990s. We appreciate the opportunity to do that. We begin by looking at what sort of society we want for our kids. There are 5 things which can be quickly identified in terms of the type of society that we would like the Northern Territory to develop into for our children in the 1990s and into the 21st century.

The first of those prerequisites is a society that is fair and just, that recognises people for their talents and abilities and not for their sex or race. The second is a society which allows individuals to fully develop their

talents and abilities. The third is a society which is able to balance the Territory lifestyle against continued economic growth and environmental considerations. The fourth is a society which provides education and health services of excellence and a welfare safety net for those who need it. The fifth is a society which recognises the efforts of those who have gone before and builds on those efforts. Too often, when we talk about the future of the Northern Territory, we forget those people who have been here before and have made important contributions.

Those general principles lead us into identifying the following broad areas of opportunity and action. I will list them together at this stage and expand on each in more detail later. We recognise that the Territory will fulfil its potential when all Territorians have an opportunity to fully share in the benefits and responsibilities of our society. A Labor government will build the growth of the Territory on the foundation of existing business and the unleashing of the economic potential of the Aboriginal portion of our community. A Labor government will build a bridge between Asia and the rest of Australia using our geography and our cosmopolitan culture as a base for economic cooperation and cultural interaction. A Labor government will aim for industries of the future, not the past, in providing jobs for a well-educated and strongly motivated work force. A Labor government will broaden our economic base to gradually reduce our dependence on federal funding and the vagaries of individual industries. A Labor government will protect and enhance the lifestyle of Territorians and the inevitable changes brought about by growth will be as a result of public discussion. They will not be simply allowed to happen. A Labor government will recognise the continuing importance of the public sector in the Territory's economy. Under Labor, it will be a well motivated and well trained organisation geared to service. A Labor government recognises ...

Mr Coulter: Trust you to end the year with a bit of comedy.

Mr SMITH: It is really interesting. On such an important matter as this, we had the grace to listen in silence to the Chief Minister. We are not offered the same courtesy, but that is typical of the arrogance of the government.

A Labor government recognises and supports the move towards statehood as an inevitable and desirable outcome of our development in the 1990s. We have set the year 2001 as a realistic and symbolic target for that achievement. A Labor government recognises that rational development and use of our land is the key to our future. The recognition and acceptance of land rights, along with research into appropriate land usage, will be our priority. We will achieve all of these things by putting people first because, in a very real sense, the key to the development of the Territory is not particular industries but the people of the Territory. That is the significant failing of the Chief Minister's statement. He recognises only economics, not people. It is a basic premise of a Territory Labor government that economic development must serve the people of the Territory and not be their master.

To achieve the Territory's full potential, all of its citizens must have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. We must plan to attract people to come here and keep them here through job opportunities and through maintenance of a desirable lifestyle. We cannot simply look to economic development in the belief that that alone will attract people to the Northern Territory and, more particularly, keep them here.

In the Labor view, social and economic development are inextricably intertwined. Quality of life, in other words, goes hand in hand with expansion of the economy. A Labor government would develop a society which sees the diversity of our cultures as an asset, not a problem. In that capacity, we could well learn from our near neighbour, Indonesia, whose motto is 'unity in diversity'. Aboriginal people in particular must be given the opportunity to share in the economic benefits and responsibilities of building the Northern Territory. That must begin with the basics. It is an indictment on all of us in Australia that, 10 years from the end of the century, people in this country continue to live in third-world conditions. The standard of living of the majority of Aborigines is appalling and it affects any chance which they may have to obtain an education or job that will break the cycle of poverty.

In consultation with Aboriginal communities, a Labor government will develop plans and strategies which will mean that, by the end of the 1990s, their standard of living and their opportunities for involvement in the mainstream economy will be equal to those of all Territorians. With the goodwill that has been built up between Aboriginal communities and the Labor Party in the Northern Territory, that will be done while preserving and strengthening Aboriginal culture and recognising its strength rather than attempting to diminish it, as this government has done consistently.

The other large group of people prevented from fulfilling their potential in our society is women. The government must lead the change in attitudes in our community on this matter. Women, whether in the private sector or the public service, must have their talents recognised and rewarded. A high priority of the Labor government in the Northern Territory will be to establish within the Northern Territory Public Service equal opportunities legislation to ensure that that happens. This community will never achieve its full potential while some citizens are treated as second-rate.

Let us turn to economic development. From a Labor Party point of view, it is essential that economic growth is steady and sustainable, that it avoids the boom and bust syndrome and that, as much as possible, it avoids social dislocation. The core of the Labor Party policy on economic development is that our economic development must be driven by Territory business people, those who have made and are prepared to make the commitment to the long haul, people in small business, the backbone of our economy, who have committed their life savings and their lives to building something positive. They are our base and they must not be shunted aside and forgotten, as often happens under this government, in favour of something new and shiny.

Labor strongly and fervently believes that new developments must be integrated into the existing business community. That is how we all develop and gain most from growth. We must ensure that new developments coming into the Northern Territory use local suppliers and local skills wherever possible, and there is a role for government in that. To this end, a Labor government will insist on development agreements for all major projects in the Northern Territory. These development agreements will not be a deterrent to or burden on developers but a plan of assistance that matches the developers' needs for local services - in other words, a win-win situation, with Territorians being the long-term beneficiaries.

Labor will support business expansion with a business guarantee program called Explan, aimed at businesses expanding or entering new markets. A Labor government would guarantee loans obtained by approved businesses from financial institutions, where loans are judged to be commercially viable,

except for equity backing considerations. With Startup, we will put in place a similar scheme for people with good ideas who are just getting started. We will not be shovelling money into non-viable projects but will largely leave the judgment of viability to financial lending institutions, with the government providing a partial guarantee.

In terms of economic development, Labor believes that red tape must be minimised for business. In general, we would achieve this through the use of sunset clauses in new legislation and by reviewing existing legislation by a regulation review task force, which will be a task force of this House rather than a task force of backbenchers. However, where business needs legislative protection, as in the case of tenants in the recent goodwill payments fiasco, we will not hesitate to move. We will protect small business from others in the business sector, or from others generally, in cases where problems are identified. We will not sit on our hands and allow identified problems to continue. We will be guided by practicality and not rigid ideology.

Another part of Labor's economic development package is concentration on the Territory's strengths. At this stage, I urge that consideration be given to establishing a school of tourism at the university, because that is one of our strengths. In this House, I have spoken repeatedly about the need to train people in the tourism industry at all levels, not simply the bartenders and the drink waiters. It will be a high priority under the Labor government in the Northern Territory to establish a school of tourism at the university.

The other major factor for business is the attitude of the public service. The Labor government's aim will be to direct the public service to put the emphasis on service. In the case of business, this will mean encouraging growth, assisting rather than simply processing. In considering economic development, we must consider the Territory as a whole, not only Darwin.

Mr Coulter: Hear, hear!

Mr SMITH: 'Hear, hear' say the members opposite, and I congratulate them. It is a pity that the Chief Minister forgot to mention that in his speech.

We have specific initiatives for smaller communities in the Northern Territory. Regional and economic facilitators will work with regional enterprise communities to pull together plans and ideas for expansion. They will open up government resources lines to turn those plans into action. Two regional economic facilitators will be put in place initially by the Labor government, 1 in Tennant Creek and 1 in Nhulunbuy.

Let me turn to Aboriginal economic development. One of the great challenges for Labor in the 1990s will be the unleashing of the potential for economic development in Aboriginal communities. We will put our energy into achieving mutual goals rather than attempting to create conflict. The first step is to recognise and accept land rights. Land rights are here to stay and the government's role is to convince non-Aborigines of their importance and to free Aborigines from the threat of resumption so that they can concentrate on extracting economic as well as social and cultural benefit from the land. It is essential - and only a Labor government can achieve this - that government take a cooperative and supportive role in working with communities towards achieving their economic goals. This will include the provision of skills to Aborigines so that they can service their own communities, as well as working with them to develop local industries that provide employment and income.

There are already very clear signs of the direction in which Aborigines are moving in terms of flexing their growing economic muscle. We have examples right throughout the Northern Territory such as the Gagadju Association and all its enterprises, the Yipirinya shopping centre in Alice Springs, the variety of Aboriginal organisations in Tennant Creek, and Tiwi Designs. That trend will continue and it is a wise businessman and a wise government indeed that recognise that, by the end of this century, Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory will achieve their rightful place in the sun through the economic clout that they will gain for themselves in the next 10 years. The Labor Party makes a commitment to the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory to work with them to achieve that economic clout, to ensure that, by the end of the century, their 25% of the population has a 25% share in the economy of the Northern Territory. That is one of the most important goals that any government can have and it is a commitment that a Labor government will give to the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory.

Let us look at the concept of a bridge between Asia and Australia. That is a goal that we happily share with this government. There is no question that we are strategically placed for a role in bridging Australia and Asia. Our geographical closeness and our cosmopolitan make-up give us a head start on the rest of Australia. It is an important economic and social goal and one that must be pursued over a long period. Hence, my satisfaction at the bipartisan nature of that goal. It must be pursued through all parts of government, through the education system, through the teaching of Asian languages and cultures, through expanding the number of student exchanges and through putting in place beneficial exchanges in the professions and, hopefully, in business. We must press for Australian business to base its push into Asia through Darwin. I concur with the Chief Minister that, in the long term, we can look at Darwin becoming a trading and banking centre for the region.

To make ourselves more relevant and more attractive, we must push for service niches such as becoming a centre for excellence in various areas of study such as tourism, tropical agriculture and tropical medicine. There is a need for a school of tourism at the university. As part of building this bridge to Asia, we must push for Darwin to become the regional centre for northern Australia. I felt that that was a significant omission from the vision that the Chief Minister has described. We are uniquely placed in that the rest of northern Australia suffers from the tyranny of distance from its centres of administration.

The opportunities are boundless. People like Phil Ruthven who analyse the future have consistently said that, during the next 10 to 15 years, there will be a major shift of economic activity from the south of Australia to the north. We are well placed to take part in that. With the North-west Shelf development, it is projected that up to \$40 000m of investment will go into the north-west of Western Australia in the next 10 to 15 years.

We should be helping and encouraging Territory companies to get a piece of that action. From my talks in the business community, I know that Territory companies are starting to realise that there are business opportunities, particularly in the top end of Western Australia. We all know, for example, that Henry and Walker has an outstanding reputation in Western Australia as a road building contractor. We know that Darwin Joinery has sought and gained work in the top end of Western Australia. We know that some of our milk goes to the top end of Western Australia. We know that firms are identifying opportunities there. Certainly, there is room and opportunity for a Labor government in the Northern Territory to take on the top end of Australia as a

major growth area and to ensure that our businesses are aware of and take advantage of the opportunities that are available.

Let us look at industries of the future. In our drive for economic diversity and independence, we must not panic. We must not succumb to the first offer of jobs that comes our way because the industries that we attract will affect the character of the Territory and the lifestyle of Territorians. In the main - and I give a commitment on behalf of future Labor governments - we must aim for industries of the future, not those of the past. In doing so, we must have some basic foundations on which to build.

Firstly, let us look at how we can tie the university into our future economic development plan. We must establish centres of excellence at the university. Some of the possibilities are tropical medicine, tropical agriculture, environmental studies of the arid and tropical areas and tourism. The Northern Territory University should have a school of tourism. It would be a significant recognition of our major industry and allow us an indigenous work force for the future. I make the point that, under Labor, the Northern Territory University will be funded to establish a strategic research unit. That strategic research unit, which hopefully will be partially funded by private enterprise, will have the job of looking at opportunities for further growth in the Northern Territory and ensuring that those opportunities are fully examined and that we maximise the opportunities that we have.

Another area that needs to be considered under the heading of economic development is adding value to our primary products. There is great scope for gains in the pastoral, agricultural and mining industries. In fact, we find the completely unsatisfactory situation where the value-added amount that we obtain from our primary industries, particularly our pastoral industry, has declined rather than increased over the last 15 to 20 years. There will be a high priority placed by a Labor government on ensuring that we look at added value to the pastoral industry in particular and to other sections of primary industry. That is a very important area indeed.

We will look at our own expenditure as a government as a key to possible industries and let me give one example. I am advised that the Northern Territory spends about \$50m a year on computing in one form or another. That is a great deal of money and it can be parlayed into computer components and a maintenance industry in the Northern Territory. With this as a base and the Asian market so close, the 1990s should offer significant opportunities for the Northern Territory to be involved in a computer industry, but we need to give it a kick start by putting pressure on those people who sell us computers to do something about our setting up some aspect of the computer industry in the Northern Territory.

The main aim of economic development in the Northern Territory must be to broaden our base and look for jobs that complement our well-educated population and enhance our lifestyle. Let us have a look at lifestyle, because it is something that the Chief Minister was very quiet about, except in passing. Too often, when we talk about economic development in the Northern Territory, we do so in a vacuum. We remove thoughts of economic development from the social aspects of what we are about. It is essential that any consideration of economic development occur within the framework of how Territorians will be affected.

We all say that we want to protect and advance the Territory lifestyle, but we do very little about it. Unless we are very careful, major economic development will bring with it serious implications for our lifestyle in the

Northern Territory. That means that key questions, such as the type of cities and towns we want to live in, have to be addressed. We need to ask ourselves whether we want high-rise or low-rise. How long do we want to take to get to work? Do we want traffic jams? Do we want smog and pollution? Do we want ready access to recreational areas? All of those questions are very important, and they cannot be left to chance. The community needs to be involved on those questions and a broad-ranging consultative process will be adopted by the Labor Party.

Mr Speaker, of course, when we have done that, we have had an amazing response, and I refer again to the planning study done by the Labor Party and given some publicity. The people of Darwin appreciated the opportunity that a Labor Party gave them to comment on our thoughts and what the Darwin of the future should look like. I give a commitment to the people of the Northern Territory that, on those major lifestyle issues, they will be consulted. Their views will be taken into account. A Labor government will work towards achieving consensus on what sort of lifestyle we should have in the Northern Territory and how it can be achieved, consistent with steady and sustainable economic development and economic growth.

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

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, let me turn to constitutional development and set the record straight once again. The Labor Party has set a realistic goal for full constitutional equality with the states, and that is the year 2001. The case for statehood will be strengthened by an improvement in race relations, which a Labor government will bring about, and a strengthening and broadening of the economic base. A realistic timetable will be developed for the progressive hand-over of powers, but the difficulties in relation to key issues such as land rights must be recognised. A Labor government in the Northern Territory will not treat the quest for statehood as a political football. We will treat it realistically. We realise that it is a desirable aim. We are committed to the year 2001 as a date by which it should be achieved.

Mr Speaker, let me turn again to the railway. The railway is an important element in planning for the Territory's future. A Labor government will apply the same judgment criteria to the railway as it will apply to all other projects - that is, the cost to the government and the benefits to the community. In the early years of the Labor government, we will concentrate on a realistic assessment of how much work the Darwin port could generate for the railway and how much benefit that work will be to the Territory. After all, there is a limited benefit and little integration in simply off-loading goods from ships to train and sending them south. It concerns me, and always has, that this Chief Minister and previous Chief Ministers see this as a main project for the 1990s. It is that sort of obsession with large projects that has brought this government to a standstill. To hope for the one big bang that will save us is not the way for a government to behave. The railway is important and a Labor government will look at it, but we will survive and flourish without it. Surviving and flourishing without it means that we will bring it closer. We certainly will not be obsessed with it.

Let me look at another area that the Chief Minister forgot in his speech: the public sector. Any vision for the 1990s and beyond must clearly enunciate the role of the public service. The Labor Party is determined that the hallmark of the public service under Labor will be service. The public service is there to assist, not simply to process. It is there to respond, not to react. As it is the largest employment area and the greatest cost centre of government, it is essential that we obtain value for money from the public service. This will be obtained through clear government goals, a strong commitment to training and retraining as jobs change and a commitment to keeping people in the Territory. Under a Labor government, public servants will learn their efforts are rewarded. In consultation with public service unions, we will reinforce and reintroduce the concept of merit being the only path for promotion.

Let us turn to the land issue, one of the issues that has not been addressed by this government. One of the major challenges of the 1990s is the efficient use of our land. Through historical development, most of our land has been allocated to larger-scale, free-ranging cattle runs. It has improved under the BTEC program but, 15 years ago, a Northern Territory pastoral lease was described as a licence to hunt cattle once a year. It is time we changed that. It is time that we recognised the need to examine large pastoral properties very closely in terms of whether that is the most effective way of using our land or whether there are better ways. We have to look at breaking down some of those uneconomic pastoral properties and making them available for agricultural, horticultural, tourist and other activities. I give a commitment that one of the first priorities of a Labor government in the Northern Territory will be to look at the use of pastoral land by means of a full inquiry into our pastoral land system with recommendations on how we can make more effective use of that land.

Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that the honourable members opposite have decided that lunch is more important than hearing the Labor Party's view on the Territory of the future.

Let me return for a moment to the subject of the public service. It is important that we ensure that we have a public service that is responsive to the needs of government and has a bent towards service rather than simply a bent towards processing and that it can get on with the job of assisting business in the expansion of opportunities.

The 1990s will be an exciting time for the Northern Territory. It will be an exciting time for everyone. It will be an exciting time, particularly in the light of the tough times that we are going through now. What we need is a government that has a sense of purpose and commitment to the future, is able to express that sense of purpose and vision and is able to get on with the job.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by moving an amendment to the motion. I move that all words after 'that' be omitted and insert in their stead the following: 'this House condemns the CLP government for its inept management of the Northern Territory economy and its failure to provide a vision for the Northern Territory economy into the 1990s'.

Amendment negatived.

Debate adjourned.



TABLED PAPER  
Public Accounts Committee Sixth Report

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I lay on the Table the Sixth Report of the Public Accounts Committee for the year ended 30 June 1989. Mr Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION  
Public Accounts Committee Sixth Report

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report.

Talking briefly to the report, Mr Speaker, the operations of the Public Accounts Committee during the last financial year were improved markedly by the fact that the membership of the Public Accounts Committee has established, and there was only 1 change in membership during the course of the 12 months.

The second point that I would like to make is that the spirit of cooperation between the public service and the committee in its work has improved markedly and there is a growing appreciation and awareness within the service of the role and functions of the committee. I would like publicly to thank those officers of the service who have cooperated so closely with the work of the committee.

I would also like publicly to thank the former Executive Officer of the Public Accounts Committee, Mr David Rice, who was with the committee from its inception and was instrumental in the good work and the progress made by the committee. With those few words, I commend the report to the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION  
Select Committee on Constitutional Development

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the terms of reference of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development be varied to read as follows:

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

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

and whereas it is necessary to draft a new state constitution:

- (1) during the present session of this Assembly - a committee, to be known as the Sessional Committee on Constitutional Development, be established to inquire into, report and make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on:

- (a) A constitution for the new state and the principles upon which it should be drawn, including:
  - (i) legislative powers;
  - (ii) executive powers;
  - (iii) judicial powers; and
  - (iv) the method to be adopted to have a draft new state constitution approved by or on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory;
- (b) the issues, conditions and procedures pertinent to the entry of the Northern Territory into the federation as a new state; and
- (c) such other constitutional and legal matters as may be referred to it by:
  - (i) relevant ministers, or
  - (ii) resolution of the Assembly.
- (2) the committee undertake a role in promoting the awareness of constitutional issues to the Northern Territory and Australian populations;
- (3) unless otherwise ordered, the committee consist of Mr Bailey, Mr Ede, Mr Firmin, Mr Hatton, Mr Lanhupuy and Mr Setter;
- (4) the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, although not members of the committee, may attend all meetings of the committee; may question witnesses; and may participate in the deliberations of the committee, but shall not vote;
- (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 that the member so appointed shall act as Chairman of the committee at any time when there is no Chairman or when the Chairman is not present at a meeting of the committee;
- (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 have power to appoint subcommittees and to refer to any such subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine;
- (8) four members of the Committee constitute a quorum of the committee and two members of a subcommittee constitute a quorum of the subcommittee;
- (9) the committee or any subcommittee have power to send for persons, papers and records, to adjourn from place to place, to meet and transact business in public or private session and to sit during any adjournment of the Assembly;

- (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 have leave to report to the Assembly from time to time and any member of the committee have power to add a protest or dissent to any report;
- (12) the committee report to the Assembly as soon as possible after 30 June each year on its activities during the preceding financial year;
- (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) members of the public and representatives of the news media may attend and report any public session of the committee, unless otherwise ordered by the committee;
- (15) the committee may authorise the televising of public hearings of the committee under such rules as the Speaker considers appropriate;
- (16) the committee shall be provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources and shall be empowered, with the approval of the Speaker, to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee;
- (17) nothing in these terms of reference or in the standing orders shall be taken to limit or control the duties, powers or functions of any minister of the Territory who is also a member of the sessional committee;
- (18) the committee be empowered to consider the minutes of proceedings, evidence taken and records of similar committees established in the previous Assembly; and
- (19) the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

Basically, this will alter the terms of reference of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development to make it a sessional committee. It also effects some minor variations to the wording of the terms of reference. The matter has been discussed at length within the committee and by both sides of the parliament. I understand that there is agreement in respect of this amendment.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, that is certainly so. We propose an amendment to elucidate the role of the committee in relation to the promotion of awareness of constitutional issues. One of the things that we have found as we have gone around the Territory is that people are very keen to discuss

constitutional issues and to work out a plan. Very sensibly, they see the constitution as the skeleton, if you like, of the new state. They see the necessity to have that in an ordered and coordinated framework, that has been removed from the hurly-burly of the actual politics of the day. The constitution is the important thing and we have to get it right. Obviously, when we have the constitution right, the demand for statehood will be incredible. That is the position that we are adopting.

Gradually, more and more people are becoming involved in discussions. All members of the committee have been visiting community groups and have had discussions with groups of students, service clubs etc. I think that an awareness of the committee's role is increasing gradually. People are beginning to understand the process of determining what the issues are and what they will have to confront in the process of reaching an agreement on the future shape of the Northern Territory. In itself, that process is important. It does not matter how long it takes to arrive at the end result. The important thing is that we are attempting to arrive at a balance of the different rights that people wish to see reflected in the constitution and to determine whether certain rights should be entrenched in the constitution. Those are issues that will be debated as the work of the committee proceeds. I commend the motion to honourable members.

Motion agreed to.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 239)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Police, Fire and Emergency Services): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

As members are aware, as a result of the 1988 controversy over proposed amendments to the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act, the Department of Law prepared new and separate legislation to form the Misuse of Drugs Bill, which was introduced in the May 1989 sittings of this Assembly. This bill has lain in the Assembly since that time, awaiting public comment. The Misuse of Drugs Bill will pick up the illicit drug offences and penalty provisions presently in the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act. This places all offences and penalty provisions for the use of illicit drugs in the one act under the auspices of the Attorney-General's department.

The Misuse of Drugs Bill does not contain any provision for police search and arrest powers. The intent was that these should be provided for in the Police Administration Act and this bill seeks to put this intention into effect. The consolidation of drug-related police powers with those already in the Police Administration Act will clarify the source of any police powers used in drug enforcement. It is important to note that ultimately the Misuse of Drugs Act cannot be administered effectively unless the powers sought by the Police Administration Amendment Bill, now before the House, are also passed into law.

The powers to be included in the Police Administration Act by this bill are substantially the same as those powers in the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act, but some terms such as 'land, aircraft, vehicle and ship' have been used to correspond to similar terms in this police administration legislation. These powers are as follows. When there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is a dangerous drug on or in land, an aircraft, vehicle or ship, or

a person, or that person's property, a police officer may make application on oath to a justice for a warrant to search for that dangerous drug. An application for warrant can be made by telephone, telex, radio or other similar means. 'Land' includes a building structure, premises or place. The issued warrant also authorises a police officer, firstly, to search any person who enters the land; aircraft, vehicle or ship, while a search is in progress and, secondly, to direct a person to remain on or in the land, aircraft, vehicle or ship for so long as is reasonably required to carry out the search.

The first of these powers is an extension of the authority provided by a properly issued warrant. The second power was already implicit in the powers under the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act, but has now been made quite clear in this bill. The bill provides that a police officer, without warrant, may stop, search and detain an aircraft, vehicle, ship, or a person on or in that conveyance, and a person in a public place, if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that there is a dangerous drug on or in that conveyance, or the person has in his or her possession or is in any way conveying a dangerous drug. The bill also makes it clear that reasonable force may be used to enter a conveyance or to search a person, and that a search of a female must be carried out by a female or medical practitioner.

The bill has been approved by the Police Powers Review Committee. I consider the powers provided by the bill to be reasonable and essential for the police effectively to continue to fight against the illicit drug trade, and I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

BRANDS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 246)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

This bill will amend the Brands Act. The purpose of the act is to enable stock to be identified easily by being branded with registered brands. The principal purpose of this amendment is to increase the penalties in the act, and to increase the maximum penalty that may be imposed for an offence against the regulations from \$100 to \$5000. The proposed increases in penalties reflect the possible economic gains able to be achieved by illegal branding.

The requirement for a brands directory is to be removed, as all the information contained in the directory is already contained in the Register of Brands. Sections relating to false entries in the register, forgery, aiders and abettors, proceedings for offences and the constitution of a court, are to be repealed because they are now covered by other Northern Territory legislation.

Provision for the registration and use of brands for special purposes is proposed in this amendment. At present, a brand may only be registered for use on a particular property. The new provision will allow breeds or types of stock to be branded by the relevant breed association such as the Brahman Breeders Association or the Quarter Horse Association, irrespective of the location of the stock. Such associations will become registered owners of a brand.

The following minor amendments are also proposed: to amend the definition of 'brand' to allow for future adoption of new identification methods such as the implanting of subcutaneous electronic devices; to require an applicant for the registration of a brand to be at least 18 years of age; to allow any person to inspect the brands register during normal officer hours; to require the owner of a brand to advise any change of address and to provide for the cancellation of the registration of a brand if a notice remains undelivered to the owner's last known address; to be consistent with other Northern Territory legislation, by replacing the reference to the 'Supreme Court' with 'Local Court' and to change the time limit for lodging an appeal from 6 months to 28 days; to change the frequency of publishing a statement of brands from 6 monthly to yearly; to make it an offence to give any false or misleading information; and to make it an offence to possess a brand that is not your own or that of your employer.

These amendments will bring the act up to date with regard to penalties imposed for offences against the regulations. The minor amendments are designed to make the administration of the act more efficient and to bring certain sections into line with other existing Northern Territory legislation. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 7 bills, the Stock Diseases Amendment Bill (Serial 248), the Abattoirs and Slaughtering Amendment Bill (Serial 249), the Brands Amendment Bill (Serial 250), the Exotic Diseases (Animals), Compensation Amendment Bill (Serial 251), the Pet Meat Amendment Bill (Serial 252), the Stock (Artificial Breeding) Amendment Bill (Serial 253) and the Stock Routes and Travelling Stock Amendment Bill (Serial 254) - (a) being presented and read a first time together and 1 motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stage and the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

STOCK DISEASES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 248)  
ABATTOIRS AND SLAUGHTERING AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 249)  
BRANDS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 250)  
EXOTIC DISEASES (ANIMALS) COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 251)  
PET MEAT AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 252)  
STOCK (ARTIFICIAL BREEDING) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 253)  
STOCK ROUTES AND TRAVELLING STOCK AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 254)

Bills presented and read a first time.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a second time.

These bills are to amend the 7 primary industry stock acts, being the Stock Diseases Act, the Abattoirs and Slaughtering Act, the Brands Act, the Pet Meat Act, the Stock (Artificial Breeding) Act, the Stock Routes and Travelling Stock Act and the Exotic Diseases (Animals) Compensation Act. All of these acts originally came from South Australia and contain varying mechanisms for appointing inspectors. The purpose of these amendments is not only to standardise the procedures for appointing inspectors, but to go one step further and make appointments under 6 of these acts automatic upon a person being appointed as an inspector under the Stock Diseases Act. 99% of the people appointed as inspectors under the Stock Diseases Act are either veterinary officers or stock inspectors who are employed within the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. Each of these employees is always appointed as an inspector under all 7 of these primary industry acts and making their appointment automatic under 6 of them will mean that the department and the Parliamentary Counsel will only have to draw up 1 instrument. However, this does not mean that any person who is appointed as an inspector of stock will always have to be an inspector of abattoirs, brands, pet meat etc, as the proposed section 113 states that such an appointment is automatic unless the minister otherwise directs.

The only other real change that is proposed to each of these acts is to include a provision in each that requires the chief inspector under each act, and the registrar in the case of the Brands Act, to issue each inspector with an identity card. This is something that is already done administratively by my department and it is intended to formalise it. Although these amendments would seem to be quite minor, they will simplify and streamline the procedures used by my department. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

LOTTERIES AND GAMING AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 244)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr FINCH (Racing and Gaming): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Lotteries and Gaming Amendment Bill is to establish a more effective regulatory system for the control of gaming machines in the general community. Honourable members will be familiar with the draw poker or blackjack machines operating in most clubs in the Territory. These machines differ from the poker machines that one sees in casinos in that they cannot deliver cash prizes. Indeed payment of cash in any manner as a prize from these machines is an offence. The machines are permitted only in authorised, non-profit clubs and they provide a source of revenue in addition to raffles and other traditional fundraising methods used by the clubs.

In the first years that these machines were operating in the Territory, there were not too many machines around and the amounts wagered were small. The machines provided a low-intensity, low-risk method of generating a little extra money for the club. The situation now is somewhat different. Some clubs have installed up to 20 machines on their premises and rely heavily on the revenue from these machines for their continued financial viability. In recent years, the technology associated with gaming machines has developed in leaps and bounds. These advantages have rendered the existing method of controlling gaming machines, which relies on a description of the games simulation, completely ineffective. Indeed, most modern gaming machines

available on the market today can simulate a wide range of games. In addition, we must recognise changes made in other Australian states and establish controls by way of a licensing system which will include licences for those people involved in the industry.

This bill allows the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission to establish guidelines for the assessment of gaming machines. The guidelines will establish specifications and standards against which the essential characteristics of any gaming machine may be assessed. Using this method, the games simulation itself becomes irrelevant. Although the guidelines themselves are highly technical in nature, the principles involved in them are simple. They will ensure that machines cannot be manipulated or modified. Most importantly, they will ensure that the machines present a fair game to the player and they will ensure that the machines are not dangerous to use. We must take notice of the increasing number of gaming machines in the community and the increasing amount of money being wagered through them. Significantly, we must take notice of the increasing reliance of clubs on the revenue generated by these machines. The opportunity for organised criminal activity in this industry is well recognised, but the major deterrent available to government is exposure. We must learn from the experience of the states and ensure that every person associated with this industry is examined and assessed to be fit and proper.

This bill requires all persons associated with the gaming machine industry to hold a permit authorising them to undertake specific activities for which the permit is issued. Permits will be issued by the commission only after police have been consulted on the suitability of the applicant. In addition, the commission will continue to monitor and assess permit holders for as long as they remain associated with the industry.

This bill introduces offence provisions of \$1000 or 6 months imprisonment. In addition, it increases the penalties to be established by regulation from \$500 to \$1000. These measures will provide increased deterrence and serve to highlight the seriousness of the offence. Larger businesses which supply gaming machines from interstate will be controlled through 2 mechanisms. Firstly, they will be required to deal through a locally established office. There are ample leasing agents available in the Territory who will be able to act as agents on their behalf. The second control, which applies equally to local and interstate suppliers, relates to their continued ability to hold a permit. If any person is found guilty of an offence relating to gaming machines or is otherwise found not to be fit and proper, this bill provides a mechanism for the suspension or withdrawal of their permit, effectively preventing their involvement with the industry. I suspect that this ability to suspend or withdraw a permit will provide even more of a deterrent than the financial and other penalties imposed by the bill. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### TABLED PAPER

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

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I lay on the table the Report of the Sessional Committee on the Environment concerning the activities of the committee from July 1988 to July 1989, and on associated issues. Mr Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.



MOTION

Report of Sessional Committee on the Environment

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, this is a report of the activities of the Sessional Committee on the Environment over the last 12 months. The report covers a wide range of activities that occurred during that period and of which you, Mr Speaker, and other members were a part. I would like to thank past and present members of the committee for the way in which they approached the work of the committee.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report, and I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later time.

Leave granted.

Mr Bell: Wait on.

Mr Vale: You are too slow.

Mr Coulter: It is not a minority report or anything, is it?

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): No, it is not a minority report. I simply want to make some comments.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to make some remarks at this time because it is an important report.

Mr HARRIS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for Ludmilla, the chairman of the committee, has moved that the report be noted and he wishes to continue his remarks at a later hour. If the member for MacDonnell is not prepared to wait for that, then I have a bit of a problem because he intends to debate now a matter which he will have the opportunity to debate at a later stage. I believe that either the debate should continue or we should accept the motion moved by the member for Ludmilla.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for MacDonnell is seeking leave to make a statement now. If the Minister for Education would like to deny him leave, he may do so. Is leave granted?

Leave denied.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would allow me ...

A member interjecting.

Mr BELL: I want to speak for 2 or 3 minutes in order to draw the attention of honourable members to what is in this report. I think it is important, and it should be debated fully later. Considerable interest will be taken in this report ...

Members interjecting.

Mr Coulter: Come on, move the suspension of standing orders.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from speaking to the motion that the report be noted.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 8

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Ede  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura  
Mr Tuxworth

Noes 16

Mr Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Amendment Bill (Serial 245) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

#### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (POWERS AND PRIVILEGES) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 245)

Continued from 29 November 1989.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, it is most important that we debate this bill thoroughly and with due knowledge that it is one of the last chances that we, as the Assembly, have to step back from the brink of one of the most stupid decisions that this parliament has made since constitution at self-government or, indeed, since the days when it was the Legislative Council. The opposition has constantly opposed the move from this Assembly to the new Parliament House, and the construction of that \$50m edifice. I urge honourable members not to take the fact that the air-conditioning is not working here as an incentive to move into some new place. Instead, they should regard conditions today as an example of what it is like for the vast majority of Territorians who live without the benefits of air-conditioning in various places throughout the Northern Territory. They should realise what it is like to be one of those Territorians who does not have access to proper accommodation, to cold water taps and to adequate services. Honourable members will be able to realise the money that is to be spent on the new edifice that is to replace this place could provide major relief for those people.

Mr Speaker, for the benefit of members opposite, I will reiterate our reservations about this project. We have reservations about the ability of this project to address the slump in the construction industry which is the economic justification that the government has given for it. Supposedly, the contract for the project is a fixed price and the determination of the fixed price is dependent on finalisation of subcontract packages. In answer to the opposition's questions during the November 1988 sittings, the government advised that we would know the fixed price by February or March this year. That was 8 months ago. When advice as to the fixed price was still not forthcoming in May 1989, the opposition again asked the government when this fixed price would be finalised. Once again, the government could not answer. Mr Speaker, it is incredible stuff.

Today, a full year after we first asked, we still do not know the final, fixed price of the project. We have been told that the State Square project, comprising the Supreme Court building and the Parliament House, has an estimated price tag of somewhere in the vicinity of \$100m. The project is financed by way of what the government has called 'a very interesting method of financing major projects'. Our semi-government loans program is being used for the project.

A member interjecting.

Mr EDE: You will have your turn in a minute and, while you are up, you can talk about why you did not do some creative financing to remedy the low level of access to housing by Territorians in the rural areas and their lack of access to schools, health services and water supplies. If the members opposite had undertaken some creative financing to correct such problems, we might have had a little more sympathy when they proposed to build this palace for themselves.

The creative financing arrangement involved raising funds through capital indexed bonds, the interest on which was initially just under 5%, payable quarterly, and increasing quarterly by the CPI. Even if it is a smart financing arrangement, it is an arrangement that encumbers us with debt and interest obligations. Whilst there is nothing wrong with the principle of borrowing money to finance projects, the opposition's fundamental question is whether the government's borrowings are spent in the best way and whether it is investing in productive assets which will create further wealth and development and long-term jobs which will result in increased assets.

Mr Perron: Is a police station a productive asset? Is a hospital a productive asset? Is a museum productive?

Mr EDE: Those are essential social infrastructure.

Mr Speaker, the State Square project clearly does not meet those criteria. For example, what is the resale value of a Parliament House? Of course, it has none. After taking interest payments into account, the project could well end up costing Northern Territory taxpayers close to \$1000m. We may end up paying \$1000m for a project which will not create 1 new job and will have a resale value of zilch. It will result in no new wealth creation whatsoever. The opposition is still of the opinion that a series of smaller projects would have done much more for the Territory's construction industry and Territory business in general than the big one-off shot in the arm, the overdose ...

Mr PALMER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I draw your attention to standing order 67 on the subject of digression from subject. We are debating

the second reading of a bill to amend the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act. Standing order 67 clearly indicates that only in debate on the Appropriation Bill is a member free to raise other matters of public interest. In debating this bill, the member for Stuart should address his remarks directly to matters contained within the bill.

Mr SMITH: Speaking to the point of order, Mr Speaker, I know that it is particularly difficult for the member for Karama to understand what is happening here. The purpose of this bill is to authorise the movement of the Legislative Assembly, including this Chamber and departmental offices, into the Chan Building and the Leichhardt Building. The member for Stuart is arguing potently that that move should not take place.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, it is clear that neither the Leader of the Opposition nor his deputy understand what this bill is about. This bill is about amending a decision already made by this parliament. I never cease to be amazed at the lack of recall of the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy, both of whom have demonstrated their lack of understanding of the very simple nature of this motion. It is about adjusting boundaries in relation to the move of this Legislative Assembly from this building into temporary accommodation.

Mr EDE: Obviously, the amendment that we have before us changes the boundaries under the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act.

Mr Coulter: Move your amendment.

Mr EDE: As soon as I put it, you will shoot me down.

Mr Coulter: Well, do not speak to your amendment now ...

Mr EDE: As soon as I do it, you will gag me. I know your tricks.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! A point of order has been raised by the member for Karama which related to standing order 67. In my opinion, the bill before the House relates to the change of boundaries to provide the protection of parliamentary privilege to honourable members in the area which is to be designated as the parliamentary precinct. I find that the member for Stuart is digressing. However, if he were to move his proposed amendment, that would certainly broaden the aspect of the debate. However, the motion before the Chair relates to the powers and privileges of the parliament and I would ask the honourable member to confine his remarks to that subject until such time as he moves his amendment.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, within the context of the boundaries, be they the current boundaries or the proposed new boundaries, our problem with all of the proposed boundary changes, including those which relate to the bill before the House, are absolutely unnecessary. We contend that we have the basis for continuing for many more years in this building so that the funds, rather than being ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Once again, the member for Stuart is reflecting on a amendment which has yet to be moved. He is talking about the continued operation of this Chamber. That is not the basis of this bill.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the honourable member to confine his remarks to the bill.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I accept your ruling. If I did digress a little, I offer my apologies if I have disturbed the tender emotions of the honourable minister.

We will be moving an amendment which will have the effect of stating that the change should be deferred until such time as the fundamental imbalances within our society are addressed, the people in the community have proper living standards and the economy of the Territory has recovered.

Mr Speaker, I move that, at the end of the motion, we add: 'that this Assembly is of the opinion that the commencement of this proposed law should be deferred until such time as the wide discrepancies of living standards and the access to services of Territorians have been overcome and the economy of the Territory has recovered'.

It is essential ...

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the question be now put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 14

Noes 10

Mr Coulter  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Vale

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Collins  
Mr Ede  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura  
Mr Tuxworth

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 10

Noes 14

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Collins  
Mr Ede  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura  
Mr Tuxworth

Mr Coulter  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron

Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Vale

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MOTION  
Special Adjournment

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday 20 February 1990 at 10 am or such other time and or date as may be set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak to the motion.

Mr Coulter: It is a special adjournment.

Mr BELL: For the benefit of the Leader of Government Business, I am well aware of the procedures of this Assembly. I suggest to him that not only am I better aware of the procedures in this House, but I have a longer memory for the deliberations of this House and its committees than he does, which I believe I will be able to demonstrate to him more than adequately.

Mr Speaker, this morning, you circulated a letter to all members which contains the sitting dates for 1990. Along with other members, I have noticed that this indicates 30 sitting days. There are 6 sitting days in the February/March sittings, 6 sitting days in May, 6 sitting days in August, 6 sitting days in October and 6 sitting days in November. When I went to school, 5 times 6 made 30.

Mr Speaker, you will recall that, during the August sittings, we tabled the Fifth Report of the Standing Orders Committee. Paragraph 4.2 of that report related to a discussion on the question of automatic adjournment of the Assembly and it contained the following sentence: 'The committee was informed by Mr Coulter that, to ease the burden of the Assembly, it is intended that the Assembly sit for an additional 3 days in 1990'. We had 30 sitting days this year, and I believe that 3 additional days would mean that we would have not 30 days, as your letter indicated, but 33 days.

Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting '20' and inserting '13' in its stead.

The effect of this motion would ...

Mr Coulter: What number 13?

Mr BELL: If you would like to give me a copy of the motion, I will read it out ...

Mr Coulter: You are the one who is moving it.

Mr BELL: If the Leader of the Government Business will cease interjecting, I will explain to him. I understand that he is a little slow with these things but, if he were to shut his mouth and read the words in front of him, he would see that the effect of replacing '20' by '13' would mean that there would be an extra 3 sitting days in 1990 by having a 3-week sittings in February/March.

Mr Collins: Why then?

Mr BELL: To answer the interjection from the member for Sadadeen, if the Leader of Government Business would like to accept an alternative amendment to his original motion, that would be acceptable to the opposition. However, I remind him of his undertaking, which was referred to in the report that was tabled. I trust that the Leader of Government Business, being a man of his word - even though he had a slight slip-up this afternoon when he suggested that an amendment be moved and then gaged it ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is aware of the standing orders, as the Leader of Government Business is aware of standing orders, as the Speaker is aware of standing orders but, from time to time, we are reminded of standing orders by the Clerk or the Deputy Clerk. In this instance, standing orders require that the member for MacDonnell put his motion in writing.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I will forthwith put my motion in writing as I speak.

Basically, we are referring to the capacity of the Leader of Government Business to stand by his word. The report indicated that the Leader of Government Business said that we would have 3 extra sitting days in 1990. He said earlier today that he would allow me to make some comments on a previous motion and I hope that, in this regard, his track record can be considered a little more acceptable than it has been hitherto. I urge that he give due consideration to his own proposal. It was his own proposal that we have 3 extra sitting days in 1990. I will give a little bit of background to honourable members. It has been quite extraordinary, particularly this year, that the Assembly has sat so many times well into the night. Last night, we finished closer to midnight than sunset and I believe that the business of the Assembly would be better conducted if we had 3 additional sitting days.

I might mention in passing that the amount of time taken has often been the result of the increasing number of ministerial statements and the increasing desire of members to debate those statements in this Assembly. I believe that, by and large, those debates have been free of frivolous repetition. By and large, they have been important debates. Occasionally, ministers have introduced statements into this Assembly that have simply involved an advertisement for themselves and have not necessarily contained substantial news for members of the Assembly, the public or the media, to whom they are presumably directed.

Concomitantly, I am deeply concerned about the relatively scant time this Assembly spends on considering legislation. In that context, the practice of ministers reading their second-reading speeches is a matter of considerable concern in that ministers are unable to lead debate and, without reading, explain to members why the principles involved are important. That is one of my reasons for never reading a second-reading speech word for word. When we

become the government, I give an undertaking that we will speak to the issues involved in legislation. I appreciate ...

Mr Coulter: You said that you would not be long.

Mr BELL: You have made up your mind, have you?

Mr Coulter: No. Just don't push us too far.

Mr BELL: Are you going to cop the 3 days or not?

Mr Coulter: Just take it easy.

Mr BELL: No. I will keep going until I have an undertaking that you will give us the 3 days.

My point is that the government could lift its game in that regard and could enhance the deliberations of the Assembly. Mr Speaker, I remind you, as you would no doubt be aware with your long and deep understanding of the Westminster tradition, of the different customs associated with second-reading speeches in other parliaments. I refer, for example, to practice in the House of Commons where it is quite within the scope of standing orders and quite customary for members to interject with questions seeking clarification when ministers speak in the second-reading stage of bills. That practice means that people have to concentrate on the issues and the arguments involved. It is very poor practice for ministers simply to stand up and read those speeches to the House. I refer also to the practice in the South Australian parliament. That practice is much closer to ours but, instead of second-reading speeches being a simple reading out of the effects of particular clauses, ministers deliver what is admittedly a prepared speech about the principles of the legislation and a detailed explanation is then incorporated in Hansard. I believe that that practice could well be addressed in this context.

Mr Speaker, I will not go on at length about the way we use and do not use our time. I will not go into the question of the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill which was associated with the report to which I refer and about which I have equally strong feelings. It is appropriate in this context to refer to the idea of the automatic adjournment which is something which occurs in the Senate. I will not try to recall the exact terms of that practice off the top of my head, but the principle is that, at a particular time, a motion is moved for the adjournment. The House has to make a decision if it wishes to defer the adjournment. The practice in this Assembly of not adjourning until 10 pm or thereabouts, as we did last night, means that backbenchers in particular are unable to pursue issues of importance to their electorates when they have been on their feet prior to that time.

Mr Firmin: And frivolous MPIs.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, to respond to that interjection, the fact is that MPIs take just over an hour and are certainly not responsible for the problem. I recommend that the member for Ludmilla check out the time spent on particular activities. I will not go on any further, Mr Speaker, except to again emphasise the fact that the Leader of Government Business has a moral obligation to accept this amendment and to ensure that this Assembly sits for 33 days in accordance with the undertaking which he gave to this Assembly in August this year.



Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I hear sotto voce comments from members opposite to the effect that they will wait and see whether we need 33 days.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the question be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 13	Noes 10
Mr Coulter	Mr Bailey
Mr Dondas	Mr Bell
Mr Finch	Mr Collins
Mr Firmin	Mr Ede
Mr Harris	Mr Floreani
Mr McCarthy	Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Manzie	Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer	Mr Smith
Mr Perron	Mr Tipiloura
Mr Poole	Mr Tuxworth
Mr Reed	
Mr Setter	
Mr Vale	

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 10	Noes 13
Mr Bailey	Mr Coulter
Mr Bell	Mr Dondas
Mr Collins	Mr Finch
Mr Ede	Mr Firmin
Mr Floreani	Mr Harris
Mr Lanhupuy	Mr McCarthy
Mrs Padgham-Purich	Mr Manzie
Mr Smith	Mr Palmer
Mr Tipiloura	Mr Perron
Mr Tuxworth	Mr Poole
	Mr Reed
	Mr Setter
	Mr Vale

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

#### MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to request you to refer a matter to the Committee of Privileges. I think a prima facie case exists that the Leader of Government Business has deliberately misled this Assembly. I will briefly go through the circumstances. There was a reference to the Standing Orders Committee earlier this year on the automatic adjournment of

the Assembly. The Standing Orders Committee, in its written record, reported on that matter. I will read out the 3 relevant paragraphs:

- 4.1 Earlier this year, the member for MacDonnell, Mr Bell, wrote to the Leader of Government Business, Mr Coulter, requesting that consideration be given to the introduction of a form of automatic adjournment for the Legislative Assembly. Mr Coulter undertook to raise the matter with the Standing Orders Committee.
- 4.2 Your committee has given the matter consideration. It was informed by Mr Coulter that, to ease the burden on the Assembly, it is intended that the Assembly sit for an additional 3 days in 1990.

No buts or maybes, Mr Speaker. The Standing Orders Committee of this parliament was informed by the Deputy Chief Minister that it was intended that the Assembly sit for another 3 days in 1990. The paragraph continued:

It is anticipated that those additional sitting days would permit a better spread of the workload of the Assembly and would reduce the need for late sittings.

- 4.3 Following this assurance, your committee has determined that it would take no further action on the matter at this particular stage.

Mr Speaker, a committee of this parliament was asked to consider automatic adjournment of the Assembly. During that consideration, it looked at additional sitting days. It was given an assurance by the Leader of Government Business that those 3 sitting days would be provided. On that basis, it decided to accept that assurance and not take any further action on its own account. The committee said that it would not take any further action because it accepted the assurance of the Leader of the Government Business on the matter. If there had been no such assurance given, the Standing Orders Committee might well have come back to this House of its own accord.

Secondly, this House has been misled by the Leader of Government Business. Firstly, he has seriously misled the Standing Orders Committee, as is demonstrated in this report. Through that Standing Orders Committee, he has gone on to seriously mislead this House about the government's intentions for sitting days in 1990. There can be no more serious charge laid against a member of this House than that he has deliberately or inadvertently misled the House on a matter. This is a particularly grave matter. This report has lain on the Table since August this year. Since the report was tabled, all members on this side have been working on the basis that there would be 33 sitting days in 1990. We now find that the agreed dates - and one might ask by whom they were agreed to because we certainly were not consulted - provide for 30 sitting days only. There is a prima facie case that the Leader of Government Business has misled this House and I ask, Mr Speaker, that you refer this matter to the Committee of Privileges.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the special adjournment motion simply says that we will start the Legislative Assembly sittings for next year on Tuesday 20 February 1990. The agreed dates that have been circulated - and a great deal of effort has gone into putting the calendar together - are simply those dates that have been agreed to at present. How can we sit here and determine what the burden of 1990 will be?

Mr Smith: You gave the committee an undertaking.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, it said that it 'was informed by Mr Coulter that, to ease the burden of the Assembly, it is intended that the Assembly sit for an additional 3 days in 1990'.

Mr Smith: That is right.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, we cannot predict what the burden in 1990 will be at the moment. I was the one who sat down with the Clerk yesterday and worked on those dates. It was no mean effort to put those dates together. That does not mean to say that another 3 days cannot be introduced during the 1990 calendar year. Let us wait and see what the calendar for 1990 has in store. It may be that the legislative program will be best suited by the addition of 3 days.

That will happen during the course of 1990 and I stand by the committee's recommendations to this House. We will examine the burden in 1990. The possible introduction of 3 additional sitting days during 1990 will be determined by the burden on the Legislative Assembly. It is as simple as that, and honourable members know it. We cannot sit here in November 1989 and determine when the burden may require an additional 3 days in 1990. We can introduce another 3 sitting days at any time during the 1990 calendar year. That is not a problem, Mr Speaker.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to speak on this matter.

Leave denied.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from contributing to this discussion.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 9

Noes 13

Mr Bailey

Mr Coulter

Mr Bell

Mr Dondas

Mr Collins

Mr Finch

Mr Ede

Mr Firmin

Mr Floreani

Mr Harris

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr McCarthy

Mr Smith

Mr Manzie

Mr Tipiloura

Mr Palmer

Mr Tuxworth

Mr Perron

Mr Poole

Mr Reed

Mr Setter

Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to make a contribution to this debate.

Leave denied.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from making a contribution to this debate.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 9

Noes 13

Mr Bailey  
Mr Bell  
Mr Collins  
Mr Ede  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura  
Mr Tuxworth

Mr Coulter  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Harris  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I will consider the matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition and will advise the Assembly at a later stage whether or not I will refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the Leader of Government Business, when seeking leave to make a statement, basically was saying that our amendment to have an extra week at the beginning of the February sittings was otiose or idle because the government was simply saying that it intended to start the sittings on 20 February and the motion itself did not indicate how many sitting days there would be in 1990. That is absolutely right.

Mr Speaker, I presume all members have received a letter similar to this one and that the Leader of Government Business has actually seen a copy of the letter that I received. I seek leave to table a copy of the letter that I received from the Speaker. Perhaps it might be taken across to the Leader of Government Business so that he can have a look at it. I will explain to him precisely what the terms are. I did not realise that he was quite so slow.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: It reads: 'Dear Mr Bell, for your information, the agreed sitting dates' - and I stress that word 'agreed' dates - 'for the Legislative Assembly for 1990 are as follows'. I will not read all the dates. It is signed by the Speaker. My point is that, if they are the 'agreed' sitting dates - and I presume that they have been agreed between yourself and the Leader of Government Business or the Whip or the Chief Minister or all of them - I seek clarification from you, Mr Speaker, that that is in fact the case. I see that that is in fact the case. Those of us who dwell in the outer darkness of opposition are not consulted on such agreements. We accept that that is one of the burdens of opposition that we will not be sharing for too much longer. If he survives, I am looking forward to seeing the Leader of Government Business dwelling in such outer darkness.

However, I digress. The point is that there was an agreement that the Leader of Government Business evidently chooses to ignore. I am not prepared to accept that. I do not believe that any member of this House should be prepared to accept that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! In his personal explanation under standing order 57, the member for MacDonnell is becoming repetitious. He has clarified that he meant 20 February to be replaced by 13 February. I do not believe that the Leader of Government Business has misrepresented the member for MacDonnell. The member for MacDonnell now is really abusing his power under standing order 57. I believe that he is drawing a very long bow at this moment.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I accept your sensitivity in that regard. My explanations perforce have been somewhat prolix because of the slowness with which the Leader of Government Business apprehends these matters. If the Leader of Government Business were a little more perceptive and more prepared to accept that he had given an undertaking, all the last half hour of debate would have been entirely unnecessary. It is very unfortunate that we are forced to besmirch this last sitting day.

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member clearly has digressed very far from what anyone could call a personal explanation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr Speaker today is an historic day in the life of the Northern Territory. It perhaps is not quite as momentous an occasion as some in the past and, no doubt, many which are yet to befall the Northern Territory. Nonetheless, it is an historic day, particularly in relation to the building in which we now stand because it is, of course, the last day on which parliament will sit in these precincts.

The first Legislative Council was established in the Northern Territory in 1947 and it seems that proceedings have been conducted in this place for something like 42 years. I would like to place on record my appreciation and thanks to past members of both the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. I refer in this regard to nominated members of the council as well as the elected members. Many people have passed through this Chamber before us, but I believe all of them pursued the same objective in their own ways. They were pursuing the interests of their constituents in terms of the task that they saw before them.

No doubt, over those years, there were plenty of disagreements as to the proper course to be taken in the interests of those constituents. Some even argued that the interests of Territorians would have been better served if we had not achieved self-government in 1978, if we had not taken that significant step of taking over the reins, to a significant degree, in respect of our own affairs. I find it amazing that politicians could argue that Territorians should not take over control of their own affairs to the maximum degree possible. Nevertheless, that argument has been made by some and I presume that, in their own way, they felt strongly that their position was correct and that the Territory was not ready for that step. Of course, if you take that attitude, you could argue that you would never be ready for something which is

being denied to you on the basis that you are unprepared. I guess it is all part of the political evolution of the Northern Territory that we should have such divergent views in this Chamber and that these should be debated. No doubt, attitudes change over time. In my mind, that is part of the political process and part of a maturing Northern Territory.

I would like to thank those members who preceded us. I do so not as Chief Minister but as a Territorian. The very fact that we are here today and able to debate the affairs of the Northern Territory is because of the efforts of those who preceded us in the fight. Most of them agitated very strongly for a degree of self-control in the Territory. They lobbied and they debated. Some of them even resigned their positions over constitutional reform and the right of Territorians to have a say over the bureaucracy which was carrying out the wishes of its Canberra political masters prior to self-government. Members of this Chamber and Territorians generally owe all those people a great debt because no one denies the giant strides which the Territory has taken since self-government. No thoughtful person would deny that, without the enormous effort made by some of our predecessors, we would not have achieved self-government when we did.

I would like to run through the names of the elected members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly who are no longer with us in this Chamber. I am indebted to the Minister for Tourism for a list which he incorporated in Hansard on 19 October. That list included all persons who had stood for office in this House. Those whom I am about to name are those who actually achieved elected status and participated in this Chamber. I will read the surnames of former members of the Legislative Council in alphabetical order: Austin, Bell, Berlowitz, Braiting, Brennan - one of the better-known and more famous members of earlier years - Callinan, Carroll, Chan - regarded as one of the fathers of the Territory, making great strides forward - Cooper, Dowling, Drysdale, Fisher - whom I was pleased to see with us at lunchtime - Fulton, Greatorex, Hargrave, Hopkins, Izod, Johnson, Kentish - who, Mr Speaker, served with you and I during earlier times - Kilgariff - who also joined us today and, of course, gave distinguished service as a Senator for the Territory - Luke, Lyons, MacFarlane - the first Speaker after self-government - Marks, Murray, Nelson - a famous Territory family name - Orr, Petrick, Purkiss, Richardson, Ronan, Rose, Smith, Ward, Waters, Watts, Webster and Withnall - who joined us in the first term of the fully-elected Legislative Assembly, a man who, like Goff Letts, served in this Chamber in 2 roles, once as a nominated member of the government of the day in this Chamber and later as an elected member. Those people played a special role in our evolution as members of the Legislative Council.

I also want to name previous members of the Legislative Assembly. The list reads as follows: Andrew, Collins, Dale, Doolan, D'Rozario, Everingham - unforgettable fellow - Hanrahan, likewise - Isaacs, Kentish, Kilgariff, Lawrie, Letts, MacFarlane, Manuell, Oliver, O'Neil, Perkins, Pollock, Robertson, Ryan, Steele, Tambling, Tungutalum and Withnall. Mr Speaker, no doubt all those names bring back memories to you as they do to me and other honourable members. During their terms of office, all of those members put in a great deal of effort with good intent even if we did not see eye to eye on many occasions. As a result of their collective efforts, I believe that Territorians, their constituents, are better off today than they have been in the past and certainly far better off than they would have been had we not taken that bold step in 1978 and taken on board the very significant responsibilities of self-government. No doubt, we make plenty of mistakes in grappling with the reins and getting on with the job, but one of the things we always agreed on was the right to make mistakes.

I also place on record my appreciation of the efforts of past and present Clerks of the Legislative Assembly and of officials and staff of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. The Clerks of the Legislative Council were Braithwaite, Behrndt, Richards and Walker. The Clerks of the Legislative Assembly have been Walker, Thompson, Chin and, of course, our present Clerk, Mr Smith.

Mr Speaker, as a Territorian, I feel some pride that I have been in this place for these past 15 years and that I have had the good fortune to represent an electorate in Darwin during the most exciting period of constitutional evolution that we are likely to undergo. I believe that even the achievement of statehood will probably be a smaller step than the achievement of self-government when one considers the magnitude of the role that we will take on between now and then. However, I was fortunate to be here at a time when we were able to take advantage of what our predecessors had fought and resigned for. I came to this House at a time when I was able to participate fully in the achievement of self-government. I feel very proud of that.

It is a nostalgic day for me to see this Assembly go. It is to be replaced by a new Parliament House of which I am sure Territorians will come to be very proud and will visit with very warm feelings in the future. It is true that the building is controversial today. However, whatever the controversy today about whether we are building a new Parliament House so that we can enjoy the benefits of sitting inside its glorious walls - and some of us will not sit in it as members, unless every member of this Chamber is fortunate enough to contest and win a seat at the next election - whatever the uproar and hoo-ha about its construction, it will be a mere flash in the pan in the life of the building. At some stage, in many years to come, other people will perhaps stand on this spot and contemplate whether the building they are in at that time has gone beyond its economic and useful life and ought perhaps to be replaced. No doubt, when that time comes, they will face the same sort of controversy over building a new Parliament House as we have faced in the past months and which probably will continue for a while yet.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, it is certainly a very impressive roll call that the Chief Minister read out, and I join with him in expressing the appreciation that I think all members must have for the pioneer efforts of those people who set off with Westminster-style democracy in the Northern Territory from 1947 onwards. The record indicates that it was a lonely and a difficult fight to achieve effective, fully elected representation and some of the stories about fights between the elected and non-elected members are certainly worth remembering. Under somewhat unusual circumstances, I met one of the early members of this parliament. In fact, I believe that she was the first elected woman member of this parliament. Her name is Miss Berlowitz and I met her whilst I was campaigning for my brother in his unsuccessful attempt to win a seat in Victoria earlier this year. I was doing some doorknocking and I met a little old lady, as she was then ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: She was a Mrs.

Mr SMITH: Was she?

Mrs Padgham-Purich: She had been married to Happy Berlowitz.

Mr SMITH: Somehow or other the conversation got around to the fact that she was the first woman to be elected to this place. I think she was the member for Fannie Bay in the parliament.

Mr Perron: A pretty enlightened electorate.

Mr SMITH: Yes. From memory, I believe that she lasted for only one term. It was fascinating to talk with her about her experiences in the Northern Territory and, although she has been gone from the Territory for a number of years now, she certainly was very fond of it.

Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Chief Minister omitted the name of Jon Isaacs from his roll call, and I accept ...

Mr Perron: No, I did not.

Mr SMITH: You didn't? Both the Speaker and myself thought that you had. I apologise to the honourable ...

Mr Perron: Not at all.

Mr SMITH: I apologise to the honourable Chief Minister.

Certainly, I recognise the pioneering efforts that Jon Isaacs made in this House. It was very difficult coming in with an entirely new team in 1977 to tangle with people who had been here for 3 years already. I believe that both my predecessors, Jon Isaacs and Bob Collins, made very significant contributions indeed to this House.

Frankly, I do not have very many fond memories of this place. It is not much fun getting your head kicked in on a daily basis whilst the parliament operates. I certainly will not go away with any really fond memories of the great times that I have had in here because they have been few and far between. I have had many frustrating times and, occasionally, I have had some angry times, but you get tired of beating your head against the wall and I will not be sorry to see those panelled walls disappear. Members on this side of the House confidently expect that we will have more fun and get more enjoyment out of our temporary abode in the Chan Building and, certainly, the new Parliament House as Labor somewhat belatedly takes its share of government in the Northern Territory.

It is a serious point that we look back on 15 years of unbroken Country Liberal Party rule. No doubt, as I mentioned earlier today and as the Chief Minister said, they have been probably the most exciting 15 years that the Northern Territory parliament is likely to see. Things moved very dramatically. However, I think it is good for democracy in the Northern Territory that we are reaching a situation where the 2 main political parties are now seen to be more evenly balanced than they have been in the past and I am sure that it will be good for democracy when the Labor Party finally achieves government in the Northern Territory. I do not expect the honourable members opposite to share that sentiment but, if they take a longer-term view, it is important to the good health of the parliamentary system that parties move in and out of office on a reasonably regular basis, and I think most people would say that 15 years, for any one particular party, is long enough.

Although I do not have many fond memories, I can certainly remember my most embarrassing moment at the hands of Mr Hanrahan when, in the full flow of a major debate on the Trade Development Zone, he produced a letter which I had written, in an indiscreet moment, to somebody I should not have written to. Certainly, that was the most comprehensive trouncing I can remember receiving in this parliament. That occurred 2 years ago almost precisely to the day. In fact, it was my birthday. I did not tell anyone at the time, but it was my



fortieth birthday. On my fortieth birthday, I received the most significant trouncing that I have ever suffered in this parliament. That was my most embarrassing moment in the House.

From my point of view, the funniest moment was probably the moment when - and I did not repeat this story at the time - an attendant of the Chamber revealed to me the presence of a somewhat amateurish portrait of Ian Tuxworth in one of the offices. I managed to bring it into the Chamber at a significant point of the debate, and certainly that was ...

Mr Manzie: I thought it was Bob Collins.

Mr SMITH: No, it was me. Certainly, it was very effective in changing the tone of the parliament at that time.

My last serious point is that it is unfortunate that tonight we have seen more examples of this government's increasing tendency to gag debate in this parliament. This parliament is for the debating of issues of significance and importance. It does not assist the expression of that debate if the government uses its numbers to apply the gag bluntly and crudely as it did on many occasions today. Unfortunately, I think the frequency of the application of the gag is evidence of a characteristic which I have commented on before: the increasing arrogance of Country Liberal Party members. Obviously, they will pay their price at the polls for that.

Mr Speaker, may I join with the Chief Minister in expressing my thanks to those Assembly staff who have assisted me during my time in this parliament. The first Clerk with whom I dealt was Keith Thompson. Then, we had Ray Chin and now we have the present Clerk, Guy Smith. All of them have been unfailing sources of help and most discreet in providing advice when we have asked for it. Certainly, they have helped my learning curve and made my transition to this parliament much easier.

To the people behind the scenes - the attendants, the other parliamentary staff and the Hansard staff - I say a sincere thank you. One of the very valid reasons for having 33 days rather than 30 days is to ease the pressure and the load that we put on parliamentary and Hansard staff and the parliamentary draftsmen and his staff as well. Too often we forget that, whilst we are in here, there is a whole army of people servicing our needs. Those people face as much strain, if not more, than we do when the hours become long. Perhaps, early next year, the government might consider the wisdom of opting for 33 days.

Mr Speaker, we on this side of the House would have preferred, for many reasons, to see this parliament continue in these premises. However, we accept that the decision has been taken. We look forward to jousting with the honourable members opposite in the new Chamber. I conclude by once again thanking everybody who has been of assistance to me in carrying out my duties as a member of parliament over the last 12 months. I look forward to seeing them again in the New Year and I hope they all - members and staff - have a happy and a safe Christmas.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, at the outset, I would like to wish all honourable members and members of the staff of the Legislative Assembly the compliments of the season for Christmas and New Year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am of the same opinion as yourself and some other honourable members that, by remaining in the present Legislative Assembly, we

would be observing more of the spirit of the community in these hard times. Nevertheless, the decision was not in our hands and all of us who oppose the move to the new Legislative Assembly must bow to the inevitable. I only hope - and I have spoken to Mr Speaker and the Clerk on this matter - that some record is kept of the little things that have made this Assembly building what it has been - little things that would probably pass into oblivion or be thrown out if somebody did not take the trouble to save them. It is the little things that we use every day that will make up the actual physical, historical record for people in the future. I am talking about 50 years down the track when other MLAs will be sitting in our places. Some of the old chairs might still be around. There are also the thermos flasks and the desks. I think it would be quite fitting if a small area could be set aside in the new Legislative Assembly building to house these little artifacts.

Mr Vale: What about you, Noel?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I will be there when you are there. Probably my personal exhibit will be a bit more interesting than yours.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it was very interesting to hear the Chief Minister reading out the list of people who previously have occupied seats in the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council, many of whom are still alive today and many of whom can still give us the benefit of their experiences. Many of them live in other places but come back to the Territory from time to time. Over the years, I have formed friendships with many of those people. Before it is too late, it would behove someone to record the day-to-day history from the anecdotes that these former members could tell. That would be a fitting historical project for the new Legislative Assembly.

The Chief Minister referred to elected members of the Assembly and the Council. There is one matter in which, in a small way, I could personally lay claim to being a little different from other people in Australia. Although my husband was not an elected member, he was a member of the Legislative Council as the Director of Mines at the time. He was a nominated member. It could be another first for the Northern Territory that a husband and wife had both held parliamentary positions in the same parliament.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not think I have anything else to add at this time, particularly given the trying physical conditions surrounding us at the moment. Whilst it is easier to put up with the heat and the humidity if one is working outside, it does become trying inside when the air-conditioning is not functioning. I will conclude by wishing all members and staff the compliments of the season.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a few comments following on from the Chief Minister's remarks. I would like to place on the Parliamentary Record some of the history of this building. The original building dates back to prewar days when the Postmaster-General's Department had possession of the site. The Parliamentary Library has books with some of the original photographs of the building damaged during the 1942 bombing etc. As I understand from some of the comments on those photographs, this part of the building was used initially as a garage or a workshop area for the PMG vehicle fleet. Later, the building was upgraded to house the Legislative Council Chamber. Those works were completed and opened by Hon Paul Hasluck on 25 March 1955.

Prior to that time, the Legislative Council met in a Sidney Williams hut, among other places. It spent time in what is now the Administrator's office

on the Esplanade. The facilities back in 1955 were little different from what they are today except that the members used to sit on extremely uncomfortable chairs. Of course, we have comfortable chairs these days. In terms of air circulation, I understand that there are some stories about floor fans being the only method of ventilation. They seemed to be on temporary secondment from places such as public servants' residential quarters and were flogged and re-flogged over a period of time. The situation was not very different then from what it is today. Of course, any suggestion that the air-conditioning malfunctions are part of a plot to reinforce the argument for the replacement of this building are totally baseless. I can give all honourable members an absolute assurance that the officers of the Department of Transport and Works endeavoured to get the system working.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the air-conditioning is not the only problem with this building, as has been clearly demonstrated. Ironically, in November 1974, almost 15 years ago to the day, Mr Ron Withnall mentioned the dilapidated state of the buildings. At that time, works were under way to replace the roof. He commented on the strange programming of trying to replace a roof during the wet season. He referred to the fact that the roof had in fact been condemned some 12 months previously.

Facilities were pretty basic in the early days. There was a single room for members only during sitting days. It had a single refrigerator, although I am not sure what it was stocked with. There was trouble with termites. However, I believe the termites have since been chased out by the green ants one sees in the corridor. In fact, honourable members at that time did not stick it out. As early as 1963, the honourable F.W. Drysdale, a member of the Legislative Council, introduced a bill to create a reserve at East Point for the purpose of a new Legislative Council building. There has been motion after motion and report after report aimed at doing something about the abysmal conditions of this facility.

In 1975, after Cyclone Tracy, there were moves to encourage the Darwin Reconstruction Commission to place a high priority on the replacement of this building which was damaged during the cyclone. Some would say that it is a pity that it was not totally demolished, and I say that with all sincerity. Certainly, that would have saved considerable heated debate in this House. The building was already long overdue for replacement and it would have been a simple solution.

Members of parliamentary committees dating back to 1975 have considered the matter and I wish to acknowledge all of the work that they have done. A committee chaired by Ms Andrew in fact selected Larrakeyah as the appropriate site for a new parliament. Later in 1975, that proposal was knocked on the head by the federal Minister for Defence. In 1978, our present Chief Minister moved that an area of land in the current precinct be set aside as the site for a new Parliament House. A sessional committee comprised of Mr Speaker MacFarlane, Mr Perron, Mr Dondas, Ms O'Neil and Ms Lawrie was appointed. It reported to parliament in 1979 on a number of proposals. In 1980, a New Parliament House Committee was appointed with some new members in addition to all of the above-mentioned members. A brief for an architectural competition was drawn up but, as I recall, nothing further was proceeded with at that time. The committee was prorogued in December 1982 and a second sessional committee was commenced in March 1983, at which time Mr Steele replaced Mr Dondas on the committee. A report of that committee was tabled in September 1983 and the story goes on. Further reports were submitted in October 1984 and November 1986.

I wish to pay tribute to the then New Parliament House Committee and an architectural design competition committee comprised of Mr Speaker, the member for Nhulunbuy, the member for Millner and myself. That committee met 11 times for many hours to appraise the results of the competition. Work did not proceed at that stage and, of course, that was purely a result of lack of funds. Further reports were submitted in February 1989 and May 1989. It is very pleasing to note that what we now have is a design of a building which is inherently Territorian. Basically, the design has been prepared by Mr Malcolm Smith of the Department of Transport and Works with further development work being carried out by an architectural team consisting of some people from an interstate firm and a number of local people. It is very pleasing to see how the design has been developed into what will become a very acceptable building.

Much has been said about the need for the new Parliament House. The situation here speaks for itself. We have had leaks to contend with. We can all remember last year when Assembly staff had to run around with buckets. We can remember major face work on the building. One only has to walk through the building now to see that the surfaces are peeling away and cracked. Green ants have taken over in many areas. We are all aware of the terrible conditions which staff have had to contend with for decades. It will be very pleasing even to move to the interim Parliament House where some relief will be provided for staff and for honourable members.

As the Chief Minister mentioned, it will not be long before Territorians see the product of their taxes. Some \$45m will be spent on this new building and I am sure that Territorians will take pride in their major public facility, as do other people throughout Australia. That symbolic building will be both pleasing and will be seen to be the result of a responsible expenditure. The amount is very modest when one considers similar buildings elsewhere in Australia.

The level of participation by members of this parliament is also significant. I have some statistics which give an indication on the basis of man hours, if you like, of the participation of members in terms of the access they have to the democratic processes on behalf of their constituents. Only Tasmania surpasses the Northern Territory with 12.28 hours per MLA. The Territory has 10.88 hours per MLA, South Australia 6.55, Western Australia 6.30, Queensland 5.33, Victoria 5.05 and New South Wales 3.02. Mr Deputy Speaker, you can see that this parliament already offers greater access to democracy for constituents than any other parliament in the whole of this continent, except that in Tasmania. The quality of representation is also important. I remember coming here 6 years ago, not having even visited a parliament. I really had no burning ambition to become a parliamentarian. I was persuaded to become involved and, 6 years ago, I began what I refer to as a vertical learning curve. I can understand the situation of honourable members such as the member for Wanguri who finds himself in exactly the same predicament.

I would respectfully suggest that it is not only members of the parliament who have difficulty understanding the processes, tactics and strategies of parliament. It is also the general public and those who interpret the performance inside this Chamber to the general public. During lunchtime, I was prompted in relation to this and I offer a very constructive suggestion that, in the New Year, this parliament should conduct a briefing for all interested persons, particularly members of the media who may find themselves in the role of parliamentary reporters, explaining parliamentary procedures so that they can understand the workings of this place. In other parliaments

throughout Australia, there are parliamentary reporters who have been working in those roles for 15 or 20 years. They understand the strategies better than most parliamentarians. With not the slightest disrespect, I suggest that we might conduct a session involving some of the past performers - people like Senator Bob Collins and Jim Robertson - who can explain some of the procedures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I spoke about quality. When I first came into this place, I said that one of the underlying factors which enabled me to make the decision to enter politics was that, compared to other such places, this place was civilised. It has always been far more civilised than other parliaments. I noted some deterioration in the situation during the year and expressed some exasperation which created a little indigestion for a number of us. My motivations were honourable in so far as I would like to see, on behalf of all Territorians, a return to civility and to constructive and deliberate debate. Perhaps during the recess period, we could also conduct a session for parliamentarians.

Before I close, I would like to add my congratulations to all past members of this Chamber and, more particularly, to all past staff of the Assembly. I wish each and every one of them a very safe and enjoyable Christmas. We look forward to seeing members and staff in the interim parliament, across the road, in far better facilities and in a far more productive environment in the New Year.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to commence by wishing a very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year to members of staff and to the Parliamentary Counsel. I saw Jim Dorling here a minute ago. He and his staff have done tremendous work during the year. I extend the same greeting to people in my electorate, teachers, pastoralists, buffalo producers and bull catchers, and it is on the latter that I would like to dwell for a few moments. While we are here being carried with the spirit of Christmas and the winding up of parliament for the year, we should remember that it is most unfortunate that many of those people in that last category - the pastoralists, the buffalo producers and the bull catchers - face ruin over this period. They will not go out for Christmas lunch with happy feelings of wealth and prosperity.

Many of these people in the Top End will spend the next few weeks wondering whether, in fact, they will survive the next cattle season. I raise this matter now because it is the last opportunity that I have to do so. I would not be doing my duty if I did not rise to bring this to the attention of the Assembly even though others may see this occasion as more fitting for the expressing of warm feelings and merriment. However, the fact is that, since I made my call the other day for a moratorium on the shoot-outs, I have been receiving faxes from buffalo producers, contractors, pastoralists and ordinary workers. I have been receiving telephone and other messages from people who support that call. People have been calling on me to ask the minister to telephone the other ministers to determine whether he will receive support for his call for a delay in the completion of BTEC until the end of 1992. If the response is good, we can pass on to the pastoralists the news that they will have 1 more season in which to clean out the bush areas, attempt to muster those feral animals and try to maximise their cash flows to see if they can take themselves through.

There are other issues. I have just received a call regarding banteng cattle. To be perfectly honest, I have probably been remiss during the debate in that I have been unable fully to appreciate the situation in relation to

banteng. Normally, I would have done more research before raising the matter and therefore I will simply ask the question as it was put to me. I find this rather strange, but I have been advised that, of all the banteng cattle which have been shot or tested, none has ever been found to have TB, brucellosis, large stomach worms or liver fluke. If, in fact, that is the case, I find it extraordinary that we are continuing to shoot them out.

Mr Hatton: We are not.

Mr EDE: At Murgarella.

Mr Hatton: They are being confined to Cobourg.

Mr EDE: No. This is below the Cobourg fence.

Mr Hatton: They are being confined to Cobourg.

Mr EDE: Apparently, there are problems with the Cobourg fence and banteng are moving freely in the area. The gentlemen around Murgarella say that they are having real problems in getting a straight answer on what they are required to do. The word is out that there is no TB or brucellosis in these cattle yet there seem to be changes in definition all the time. I ask the honourable minister whether he could have a suitably qualified person look at the area and determine whether a clear program can be defined which acknowledges that banteng are clear of TB and brucellosis and always have been. That would allow those banteng to be excluded from BTEC and enable them to survive as a species for a further 175 years.

Mention was made earlier of the late Mr MacFarlane, a previous Speaker in this House. He is survived by his sons who have continued in the pastoral industry. It is most unfortunate that, at Moroak Station, BTEC has been causing incredible problems. I have with me a copy of a letter. The minister has also received a copy. It is addressed to the Divisional Veterinary Officer from the MacFarlanes' solicitors and states that the special BTEC loan approved for their clients has not been paid. It says: 'The last variation of the program, whereby shooting would commence on selected portions of the station, has not been adhered to and this has prevented our clients' strategic management to proceed as planned'.

The whole problem is that they were told that the shooting would start at a later stage. They set up their strategic mustering program to try to maximise their return from those feral stock before that shoot-out took place, but the whole process has been brought forward. Mr Deputy Speaker, put yourself in their situation. If it is brought forward, they are unable to obtain the expected financial return from those stock and their cash flow is destroyed. These MacFarlanes are pretty big fellows. I can foresee a couple of very angry MacFarlanes if in fact ...

A member interjecting.

Mr EDE: Exactly. Between the lot of them, you have a fair crowd.

If the result of the meeting is that another year is granted and if there has been a major shoot-out in the meantime, that will mean that, whilst everybody else has an extra year, the MacFarlanes will already have lost a sizeable proportion of their bush stock. It is a major problem for those people. It is their livelihood. As honourable members know, they are not rich, landed graziers who have very extensive holdings and properties

elsewhere. These people are battlers who have worked through drought, flood and fire. They are gradually getting on top only to find that BTEC is beating them to their knees.

Many of them do not agree with everything that I say about BTEC. Some of them believe that, even in the Top End, it is possible that my problems with end hosts and vectors will not arise. However, what they do say is that they have not had the time to undertake the eradication that pastoralists in other parts of Australia have had - at least 10 years and, in some instances, 20 years. Territory people have been pushed rapidly with these shoot-outs over the last few years. They have had to try and get on top of it, with all the shoot-outs. They live in an area where there is not a long tradition of confined, quiet stock. Theirs has been what amounts to a harvesting operation rather than a more traditional cattle operation.

There is another matter that I wish to raise. I would not have taken this to the extent of mentioning names except that the honourable minister himself mentioned the names of the people involved in Texfern this morning in his reply after the debate was over. It is a source of real worry to me that those people are, in fact, veterinary surgeons in his department. They are not people who are well outside the BTEC program.

Mr Reed: Do you know what they do in the department as vets?

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a question that I would like to put to the honourable minister. I was telephoned today by a person who did not leave his name. However, he went through the process and obviously knew the program. He said that he failed in his application for one of those loans. He indicated that one of the gentlemen concerned was involved in assessing his herd in relation to his application for a loan under the program. That is pretty close. We must remember that we are talking about a very small group of vets. We are not talking about 40 or 50 in the Top End. We are talking about a small group of vets, all of whom know each other well, all of whom would find it particularly difficult to divorce their personal relationship from their professional relationship with other vets who apply for loans. I am quite prepared to accept that these 2 gentlemen are the very finest of vets and are people of the highest integrity. It is not them that I am talking about, but about a system that does not have within it clear definition of what is right and proper. What public servants can do should be clearly established. What is the propriety of public servants being involved in private enterprise? We are not talking about people moonlighting. We are talking about people who are involved in private enterprise and who then seek, through a program which is operated and controlled by the department of which they are a part, soft loans or grants for the enhancement of their business enterprises.

I can understand businessmen being genuinely upset with public servants being in competition with them, particularly when that competition relates to grants and loans. It was a situation in which a number of people were competing for a small number of loans and some had to miss out. When the competition involves a couple of staff members of the relevant departments and I am advised that at least one of those had some involvement in assessing herds to decide whether they were eligible for the program, I can understand people's anger. From what we have heard, it is clear that, at the very least, this is a question of propriety. It is understandable that the people who have missed out have the perception that there has been some unfairness in relation to themselves. If for no other reason, I believe it behoves the honourable minister to provide us with more information as to whether he or

the Chief Minister will establish some guidelines as to what is right and proper in this regard. This is a matter that has been discussed in the states. If we put clear guidelines in place, it will be better for all concerned. The individuals will know where they stand and people in the industry will have far more confidence in the system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, I wish all honourable members and their staff the very best for the Christmas period. I hope that they have a happy and a safe Christmas and New Year, and that they are all well and fit to return for the first meeting in the new Assembly across the road, unless I can find one last way to stop it. I doubt that I will be able to.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, it seems hard to believe that, for myself, nearly 9½ years have gone by and this will be the last day that we will sit in this Chamber. The day that I first entered this House will go down in Territory history as one of some infamy because it was 19 August 1980, the day that the news broke that a baby had disappeared at Ayers Rock. We all know that story, the heartache it has caused and the cost to the Territory. It is a chapter that we would all prefer not to have occurred. However, it did happen. It was also my eldest daughter's tenth birthday. Thus, it is always easy for me to remember that date.

It has been a fascinating and interesting experience. It has been a privilege to have been in the Assembly during these exciting times. We have had many ups and there have been a few downs. Just before my first sittings, I recall travelling to Darwin on a plane with the now Chief Minister. I remember being introduced to his wife. He said to me: 'The one thing that you will find about politics is that it is never dull'. How right he was. There have been many exciting and interesting times and a few frustrating times. However, I would not have swapped it for quids. It has been a grand experience. Members know my feelings about the new Parliament House and I do not think there is any point in elaborating further. The decision has been taken and we will leave it there.

I recall the then Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, saying to me: 'I want you to keep on the tail of Bob Collins'. Bob was not the Leader of the Opposition at the time. 'Follow what he says and, if you can pick holes in it, do so and annoy him because that will let the rest of us get on with our job'. That was one of the easiest jobs that I ever had. I only had to look at Bob and stare him in the face and he would be jumping up and down and becoming very annoyed with me.

One of the funniest things that I will always remember occurred after the 1983 election. The Labor Party made a host of promises during the federal election campaign and somebody kept posting up in the Nelson Building all the Labor promises which were rapidly being broken. There were about 15 of them. At that time, the then Leader of the Opposition, Bob Collins, had his office across the hallway. The Labor promises would appear, disappear and then reappear. I happened to come to the top of the stairs one day when Bob Collins came out of his office and saw the promises on the wall. He grabbed the paper with one hand and ripped it off the wall. Four drawing pins went flying. He looked up and saw me with a large grin on my face. He said: 'You have been doing this'. I said: 'What is that, Bob?'. Never one to be totally beaten, he raised in an adjournment debate the great damage that somebody was causing by making giant pinholes on the wall of the Nelson Building. Those giant pinholes will no doubt be bulldozed in the next few months with the Nelson Building and the evidence will be gone. I would never admit or deny having put those papers up. However, it was a lot of fun seeing Bob somewhat annoyed about that matter.



The 9½ years have gone very quickly. It has been a privilege to have served the electorate of Alice Springs and then the electorate of Sadadeen in this Assembly as their representative. It is a great privilege to serve the people there. I trust that I will be able to do the same over the road and in the new Parliament House.

I would like to pay tribute to all the staff, past and present. In particular, I would like to pay tribute to a person who sat in the seat where you are sitting, Mr Deputy Speaker. Most of us tend to be elected and then find out what it is all about. It often takes us a long time to learn the finer points of parliamentary procedure. A person who was a really great friend of mine, one who was a bit older and, in many ways, quite a bit wiser, was the late Les MacFarlane, a former Speaker of this House. Many a time when I was feeling frustrated and churned up - and I had been chewed around the earhole as much by my own party as by the Labor Party - I could go to Les and talk things out. I valued his wisdom and experience greatly. He was a tremendous fellow and it is really sad that he is no longer with us.

I pay tribute to the various Clerks and all the staff of the Assembly in my 9½ years. They have been totally professional in their outlook and cheerful when members have made demands on them. I have appreciated every one of them. When I leave the Assembly eventually, these people will be very much in my memory as people whose friendship and service are greatly valued. I wish all members of the Assembly and staff a very prosperous Christmas and enjoyable holidays.

Mr HATTON (Health and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising tonight to speak in this Chamber for the last time, I do so with no sense of sadness at all. Quite frankly, I think this is one of the most non-functional, disgraceful parliamentary buildings that I have ever had the misfortune to see. As a functional unit for the processes of parliament, I will not be sad to see it replaced with something that will reflect the vibrant future that the Northern Territory has.

However, that is the bricks and mortar. At the same time, this building carries with it many memories of events and circumstances that will always have a place in the hearts of people who have served here. It has been said that war is 90% boredom and 10% hell. I think it would be fair to say that parliamentary debate is 99% mediocrity and boredom and 1% high drama. It is the high drama that makes parliament what it is. There is no doubt that many debates - and some might even say this afternoon's debate - drag on and people seem to be repeating themselves time and again. At the moment, some members in the Chamber feel a sense of boredom and disassociation with the process. However, even in the short period that I have been associated with the parliament, there have been times of drama, true parliamentary debate and quite a good smattering of comedy. We can remember the high drama of Aboriginal demonstrations in the public gallery and a number of demonstrations in and around the grounds of the parliament. We can remember some of the dramatic debates associated with the Lindy Chamberlain trial, the Criminal Code and public service legislation.

I vividly remember the debate on the Work Health Act. I mention that legislation because of the process of parliamentary debate in the committee stage which epitomised the genuine role of the parliament in considering legislation in depth and detail. There are many occasions on which amendments put forward by members of the opposition, the crossbenches and the government are considered and adopted in debate in this parliament. However, that particular milestone legislation was very complex. In many ways, it changed

the principles associated with workers' compensation and work health. Many hours of debate led to many changes on the floor of the House and resulted in what I believe to be one of the most advanced systems of work health and compensation for work-related injuries in this nation. Every member of this parliament should be very proud of that debate. Such milestones are part of the heritage of this building. I certainly have fond memories of those occasions and I look forward to taking those memories into the new building.

As I said, I have no qualms at all about seeing the end of this particular combination of bricks and mortar. In the future, we will have a place that will reflect a vibrant, forward-looking Northern Territory and which will symbolise the core of the people's House, the core of the spirit of democracy as the people meet to determine their future. That is what the parliament represents and that is why the Parliament House is a fundamentally important public building, one which every Territorian should be able to look at with pride for its symbolism as much as for the great and mediocre things which occur inside it. It is that symbolism which will protect freedom and democracy in the future and, in the end, that is what parliament principally stands for.

Having made those comments, I feel that it is absolutely imperative that I leave this place with a clear conscience. There has been a particular matter of debate during the course of these sittings, a matter of controversy between myself and the Leader of the Opposition. We have argued backwards and forwards across the floor in the course of adjournment debates and that has led to some public comment. The matter relates to particular circumstances associated with sexual assault referral services in Darwin. There was correspondence in the newspaper yesterday.

This afternoon, I had the opportunity to meet with a social worker from the Department of Health and Community Services and representatives of the Ruby-Gaea Centre Against Rape. We met for some 2 hours to discuss the incidents. To clarify the situation, I must say that the social workers and hospital and departmental personnel were carrying out proper and professional follow-up work in respect of that particular client. The Ruby-Gaea staff were also contacted and were engaged in counselling services. The 2 groups were not communicating with each other, and that is not a criticism of either. Certainly, there was a breakdown in communication. Both groups were providing a professional service.

There was a mistake in my comments in this House and I wish to correct it publicly. The person who was engaged in making contact with the courts to obtain bail adjustment in that case was, in fact, the counsellor from the Ruby-Gaea Centre. I apologise for misrepresenting the facts in that case. In all honesty, I believed the information that had been made available to me and I willingly apologise for any errors that I have made in that regard.

Equally, I stand by the work being carried out by the staff of the Department of Health and Community Services. This afternoon, we have determined on an improved process of communication between departmental officers, myself and the Ruby-Gaea Centre Against Rape, to ensure that, if we have concerns about each other's service, we talk to each other before we talk elsewhere so that we can at least sort out our own problems first. I believe that, in almost all circumstances, we can resolve issues in an appropriate manner. If that is not possible and we agree to disagree, we will at least know that we are fighting on the basis of the same set of facts and that would make the fight even and open. That is part of politics and government.

I trust that the Leader of the Opposition will accept my explanation in the spirit in which it is intended because I believe that it is vitally important in parliament that all members seek to ensure that the truth and the implications of the truth are placed before this House. Far too often, people like to play with words and leave false impressions even if a lie has not actually been told. I think that is unconscionable behaviour. As we progress forward as a parliament, I trust that we can look to providing leadership to the Northern Territory community. When we move into our interim location and into the permanent site for the Northern Territory parliament, I hope that we can continue to develop a tradition of Northern Territory parliamentary democracy which will rival that developed by our forebears from whom we draw our basic traditions.

In conclusion, I offer the warmest compliments of the season to all people in the Northern Territory and especially to those hardworking and dedicated people in the Department of Health and Community Services, many of whom will be providing services to the community while we are enjoying our Christmas lunch - the nurses, doctors, social workers and community workers and the many volunteers in community organisations who provide vital and important services to the community. I trust that their workload will not be too heavy over Christmas and that they can have an enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

I also thank all the staff of the Legislative Assembly for their patience in putting up with many hours of often very boring debate. I trust that they will enjoy the Christmas break and we look forward to their coming back in the New Year with renewed vigour in improved working circumstances in the interim parliament. I am sure that we will have good debates there. I am sure all members would like to think that we could offer staff some earlier nights, and we would like them ourselves, but there are no promises in this game. Finally, I extend season's greetings to the staff of the Conservation Commission and to the people of the Northern Territory, particularly those in my electorate. I trust that everybody will have a healthy, happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in rising to make my final comments in this House, like the Minister for Health and Community Services, I also feel rather humble and saddened. I have had the privilege to be a member of this House for the last 5 years or so and, as was said by the Minister for Transport and Works, it has been a fairly swift learning curve for me and it has been just as vertical for me as his learning curve was for him. I have certainly enjoyed the many hours that I have spent in this place over that 5 years. It certainly has been a learning experience because, in my opinion, there is little doubt that, when people are elected to this place, they know almost nothing about its functions or the parliamentary process.

Mr Vale: Some still don't.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I would like to offer my apologies to the Minister for Tourism who seems to have been jolted out of his reverie.

I can recall that, as a new boy in this House, I was seated on the other side of the Chamber, close to where the Serjeant-at-Arms currently sits. On one occasion, I was looking up through the glass of the press box and I noticed that the paint on the ceiling was peeling. Subsequently, in an adjournment debate, I was rather critical of the state of repair of these premises and I gathered from the look that appeared suddenly on the Clerk's face that I had somewhat upset him. Of course, I have since come to learn that the reality is that this building has been long overdue for replacement. In fact, it was costing an horrendous amount to maintain on an annual basis.

Of course, as a previous speaker indicated, this is not functional at all as a building for a parliament. In 1964, when I first came to the Northern Territory, I recall driving down Mitchell Street where there were only a couple of buildings apart from the Legislative Assembly. One was the Nelson Building and the other was the Wells Building. Those were the 2 new government buildings in those days. For Darwin, in 1964 or 1965, they were fairly impressive.

The architecture of this Legislative Assembly is singularly and totally unimpressive for a Parliament House. On occasions, I have walked down the street to show visitors to the Northern Territory our Legislative Assembly and I have said to them that this is our Parliament House. I must say that I have been rather ashamed of the architecture of the building. Externally, it is quite a nice building as such but, as a Parliament House, it is not impressive. This is a very comfortable and functional little Chamber which, in effect, will be transposed across the road and used for the next 3 years or so. Nevertheless, the reality is that this precinct is totally non-functional. Mr Speaker has his suite on this side and the Clerk and the Table staff are located in an adjacent building. The remainder of the Assembly staff and the library are in the Nelson Building. It is totally non-functional, particularly during the wet season when one has to cross and recross the forecourt area to get to and from the Chamber.

However, I am very pleased that we have bitten the bullet and taken the decision to construct a new Parliament House. As a member of the New Parliament House Committee, I am pleased that I have had some input into the design. I think it will be a very functional building and, in a tropical way, it will be quite attractive externally. The accommodation for members, staff and members of the public who join us in the gallery will be a far cry from what we have had to put up with these many years.

I felt quite a lump in my throat when I heard the Chief Minister mention the names of all of those people who have stood in this place over the years. I know many of them personally and it makes one realise that one's personal contribution to debate and the evolution of the parliamentary process in the Northern Territory is indeed fairly minimal. As time rolls by, and as we develop the history of the parliamentary process in the Northern Territory, the few short years that we each spend here will fade into insignificance when one considers the total history. Of course, that is the case in the states and in the federal parliament.

From time to time, we hear complaints about the few short days that we spend in this place. In fact, there was quite a debate this afternoon about whether we should be sitting for 30 days or 33 days or whatever. But, the first thing I need to point out is that members of the Legislative Assembly work just as hard, if not harder, when they are not in this place than when they are, because only 1 person out of 25 is on his or her feet speaking at any one time whilst the rest are listening.

Mr Harris: It is all right. Keep going.

Mr SETTER: I hope that you are listening, minister.

Mr Harris: I am listening.

Mr SETTER: When I am in my electorate office and working in the community, the hours may not be as long as those of a sitting day, but I work just as hard, if not harder, than when I am in the Chamber. I know that all honourable members are in the same position.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thought I would take the time to look at some of parliamentary sitting days and sitting hours for similar parliaments in the states of Australia. I will give Lower House figures only and these relate to 1988. The Northern Territory sat for 30 days in 1988, for a total of 272 hours. The Legislative Assembly of Western Australia sat on 48 days for a total of 358 hours. That is a much larger parliament and it sat for 18 more days than this parliament yet the total sitting hours are quite comparable. New South Wales, a very large parliament servicing about half the population of Australia, sat for only 41 days for a total of 328 hours as compared with our 272 hours. The Queensland House sat for 46 days for a total of 468 hours. For a parliament of only 25 members which has only partial self-government to have sat for 272 hours, as compared to the figures that I quoted for larger parliaments, relatively speaking, was a very good performance indeed.

We hear honourable members of the opposition say that we should move the adjournment earlier. I know that the member for MacDonnell wishes us to adjourn at 6 pm. I understand that a letter was received recently from the Leader of the Opposition suggesting that we should adjourn no later than 10 pm. However, what members opposite need to understand is that the parliament meets so that the government can process its business. Of course, it is a forum for debate for all parties, but the priority is that the government must process its business. Time after time, the normal flow of business in this place has been frustrated by the delaying tactics of the opposition. There have been debates that have continued for many hours and it is late afternoon or early evening before we have come to the normal business of the day. If that means that members of the opposition have to sit here until the wee hours of the morning as a result of delays they have caused and their attempts to frustrate the business of the government, then so be it. They cannot blame the government if they have wasted 5 or 6 normal sitting hours and then complain because, in its desire to complete its business, the government requires the House to sit until the late hours of the evening or indeed the wee hours of the morning.

Earlier this afternoon, we heard a complaint from the Leader of the Opposition when he drew attention to the fact that the government had applied the gag. I am quite sure that he is fully aware, as are most other members, that the gag is commonly applied by governments in other parliaments around Australia. In fact, in the House of Representatives, on many occasions, a proposed motion is not even debated. The gag is applied immediately and no debate ensues. For example, when a censure motion is moved by the opposition, the government moves the gag immediately. The motion is put and it is all over. It is as simple as that.

I do not believe that this government has ever applied the gag in that way in relation to a censure motion. The least time that has been allowed for debate on a censure motion was earlier in these sittings when we allowed one speaker from the opposition and one speaker from the government. In my opinion, that gave ample opportunity for the opposition to put its argument and for the government to rebut it, and that is exactly what occurred.

I do not believe that the time of this House should be wasted by the opposition in its attempt to frustrate the business of the government. I do not think that members should have to endure that sort of approach. It is very interesting to note what the Leader of the Opposition said on 21 August 1986. It is recorded in the Parliamentary Record at page 486. In reference to a censure motion, he said: 'The opposition has always used censure motions sparingly. We have always been conscious that it is a serious

thing to move a censure motion, and it is particularly important that a new Leader of the Opposition consider carefully the merits of any proposal for a censure motion'. Those are admirable sentiments but, regrettably, in these last 2 sittings, he has forgotten those words of earlier days.

In closing, I would like to thank the staff of the Legislative Assembly for their efforts over these many years. I know that they have had to sit here for long hours listening to debate when they certainly would have liked to have been home in their beds. I would like to thank all members of the staff for their efforts and for their tolerance, and to wish them all a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, in speaking in the adjournment debate this evening, I would like to touch on a number of issues that have been raised during the course of these sittings. I will start with a point that the member for Jingili touched on a moment ago in relation to the gag. It needs to be made very clear to the people of the Northern Territory that the government really is not trying to gag meaningful debate. A good example occurred yesterday when the member for Stuart indicated that we were gagging debate on a particular matter. The public should be aware that, following that motion which he referred to as gagging debate, that particular debate continued for 3½ hours. There was no gagging of the debate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to see that the member for Stuart has come back into the Chamber because I want to touch on a number of the issues that he raised yesterday during the matter of public importance discussion. The honourable member has the opportunity to ask me questions and to speak during the adjournment debate on matters which are of concern to him. I believe that, wherever possible, I have replied during the course of adjournment debates and answered the questions that he has asked of me. I will continue to do so.

In the course of the debate last night, he said that the appointment of staff at Batchelor College is taking a long time. He said that only 17 of the 70 staff members had been appointed and asked me to shed some light on this matter. It is taking a long time, but it needs to be pointed out that that is a matter for the Batchelor College Council. The reason for the delay is that the Batchelor College Council decided that it wanted a very large interviewing panel involving both academics and traditional Aboriginal people. Because of the large number of applications and the difficulty of arranging for them to be processed, it has taken longer than expected. Again, I point out that that is a decision of Batchelor College. It is misleading to infer that the government is responsible for that delay.

The Batchelor College Council elected from among its membership the panel to select staff for the college. This panel consists of the chairman of the college council, the deputy chairman, the director, Northern Territory Education Department representatives, a FEPPi nominee, a Northern Territory Teachers Federation representative and 2 other Aboriginal members of the council. The council decided that selection and appointment of a deputy director, an assistant director and heads of school will not proceed until after the director's appointment has been finalised. At this stage, this seems likely to be early to mid-December. I agree that this matter needs to be resolved quickly but I think that the council is acting responsibly in approaching the matter in this way.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there were a number of other points raised during the course of that debate. I seek leave to have answers to those questions

incorporated in Hansard. The questions relate to assessment program results in Aboriginal schools from 1986-1988, the provision of essential services to Aboriginal outstation schools, the establishing of secondary facilities at Ngukurr, the small high schools working party, Year 10 examinations, the lack of counsellors at Driver High School, Aboriginal education policy, teacher accommodation, in-service induction programs and retention rates.

Leave granted.

Primary Assessment Program Results for Aboriginal Schools from 1986 to 1988.

When the Northern Territory government took over education in the Territory, the first results on different tests showed an alarmingly low literacy and numeracy rate, as low as 3% to 5%. Since then, we have commenced a core curriculum for Aboriginal schools. The assessment program shows overall results have improved markedly from that very low base. Page 2 of the attached summary indicates an average of 40.6% for maths and 55.2% to 73.1% for English. It is stressed that comparisons between years are not reliable because in the past not all students have taken the test. We will not have an accurate year to year comparison available until after the 1989 report when, for the first time, all students are required to undertake the test.

The report was quoted selectively in the House. The member for Stuart did not refer to the summary at the end of page 2 which puts a more positive and balanced light on the matter. It said: 'In summary, the results for reading comprehension and reading for different purposes appear to be satisfactory and the trends are encouraging. A new mathematics test to be used in 1989, based on Stage 4 of the Western Australian mathematics syllabus, includes items testing a wide range of knowledge and skills and should provide more useful information regarding students' capabilities. It is fair to expect improved performance in all areas once students' weaknesses are correctly identified and proper remedial strategies are taken'.

Provision of Essential Services to Aboriginal Outstation Schools.

Mr Brian Ede MLA recently wrote to a number of ministers about the need for a coordinated approach to the provision of services to Aboriginal outstation communities following the passing of the Aboriginal Community Living Areas Act. Outstation schools are generally very basic structures and are only serviced by visiting teachers perhaps once or twice weekly. These schools rely on local members of the community for their day-to-day operation. This department only provides a full delivery of educational services after discussions with the community indicate a degree of stability - permanence.

Therefore, the initial delivery of education to outstation communities frequently precedes the provision of services. The government already has in place a number of effective planning mechanisms and methods of interdepartmental coordination and consultation which, from the perspective of the education portfolio, are adequate to the task of providing services to Aboriginal communities.

On 9 August 1988, the government approved the release of interim guidelines on the levels of essential services to Aboriginal communities. These interim guidelines were trialed over a 12-month period. The guidelines, together with departmental comments, are currently being redrafted for consideration by government. Until such time as these guidelines are finalised, the department will follow the usual consultation process with regional offices to assess educational needs and the requirement for associated facilities. Where sufficient need is demonstrated to warrant the establishment of a school, the Department of Education will liaise with all relevant authorities in respect of the provision of necessary services. The level of services to be provided and the funding of those services will be consistent with the guidelines.

Local communities will be given the opportunity to accept direct carriage of projects to construct educational facilities under the government's policy of devolution of capital works to communities.

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#### Ngukurr - Secondary Facilities.

Once again, it appears that the opposition spokesman is not up to date. The commitment the minister made when he and Mr Dawkins visited Ngukurr has been honoured. Two follow-up meetings have been held with the community to design a 5-year plan leading to secondary education to Year 10. A third meeting is planned for 11 December.

Provided that educational targets agreed with the community are met, the plan will lead progressively to full secondary teaching on site. Correspondence teaching will be commencing in 1990 for those students whose parents wish it and who are capable of handling secondary work. It is stressed that the plan depends on primary students achieving a reasonable standard of primary education before starting secondary work and secondary students continuing this achievement.

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#### Small High Schools Working Party.

It was alleged in the MPI yesterday that the Small High Schools Working Party had met only once. This is quite misleading because the honourable member neglected to mention that, following that meeting, visits took place with each of the small high schools concerned to ensure that there was an opportunity for local input.

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#### Year 10 Examinations.

No scaling of either individual questions or overall marks was required in the case of the English papers. In the case of mathematics, because students had a choice of questions, it was necessary to ensure that allowance was made for any differences in question difficulty which emerged.

Following the marking of the papers, a panel of experienced teachers and subject specialists reviewed each question and recommended an appropriate scaling procedure to eliminate any discrepancies owing to difficulty of individual items.



A further overall scaling procedure was applied in the case of the level 1 and level 2 mathematics papers to allow for the length of the papers.

The marking and scaling procedures used by the Board of Studies are designed to ensure fairness and equity for all students.

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Driver High School - Lack of Counsellors.

Driver High School, like all other Northern Territory high schools, chooses the configuration of its staff. It is the school's responsibility to allocate a counsellor and it does have a school counsellor. It is grossly misleading to suggest that Driver High School has not been supported since its establishment. The opposite has been the case. It has been given additional staff during its growth period and still has 2 additional staff for 1990.

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Aboriginal Education Policy.

It was alleged that the minister failed to respond to Mr Dawkins. Mr Ede would have us endorse any Commonwealth initiative hastily, without careful consideration of implications for the interests of the Northern Territory.

Officers of the Northern Territory Department of Education and DEET have been engaged in negotiations relating to the AEP since early this year. Negotiations have been and are progressing extremely well, from both the Territory's point of view and DEET's.

The amount of \$15m that Mr Ede mentioned is the latest figure put forward by the Commonwealth, after months of negotiations, even before Mr Ede became aware of the AEP.

As usual, Mr Ede has got his figures completely wrong because he spends too much time skimming over issues without ever being able to come to grips with the detail and understand the issues, and is too busy running around lighting bushfires. So that 'Bushfire Brian' can become familiar with the issues on this topic, let me explain to him that there is \$33m of new Commonwealth money over and above what the states received this year. Of this \$33m, the Northern Territory has been told it will receive \$6.8m rather than the \$3m initially offered. The NT has 15% of the Australian Aboriginal population. However, it has 64% of the nation's non-English-speaking or traditional Aborigines and a substantial proportion of these live in remote areas. It would appear that you would accept any amount that you are offered, even at the expense of the Northern Territory.

Instead of accusing me of 'dealing with the Commonwealth in a glib fashion' why don't Mr Ede and Mr Snowdon go in to bat with me for Aboriginal Territorians to ensure that at least in one program they get an equitable share of Commonwealth funding.

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Teacher Accommodation.

It is unfortunate that the opposition continues to compare the NT government's housing record with South Australia and Western Australia. While it is acknowledged that South Australia in recent years has upgraded its housing in its remote Aboriginal communities, it should be realised that there are only half a dozen schools comparable to those in the NT. The Northern Territory has to service well over 100 Aboriginal schools and up to 70 outstations. South Australia and Western Australia have a relatively small number of outstations - the Territory has approximately 600, 50 to 70 of which have or have had an education service.

Community mobility - a crucial factor in this whole equation. Take Papunya as an example. Papunya was designed to take approximately 1000 people. There are now 200 people there. All across the whole Territory, there are communities where housing of adequate standard has been built for teachers. Because of the outstation movement, the department has transferred dozens of these houses to community housing associations when they are no longer required for their original purpose of housing recruited teachers. There is one good side effect in transferring these houses to community associations. We try to encourage associations to allocate these houses to trained Aboriginal teachers, teaching assistants or Aboriginal staff employed in the school. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. We have the very difficult situation of Aboriginal people employed in our schools who have studied, are working and have family responsibilities, yet are not provided with adequate housing and have no opportunity (since there is no private market) to do anything about it.

When the department provides new housing to new communities, they are built to the same standard provided in South Australia and Western Australia. However, because it has had to bear this extra burden of building new houses when houses had already been provided in the original community, and because it has 10 to 20 times as many predominantly Aboriginal schools as the other states, of course we have had difficulty in replacing the former Commonwealth built 'silver bullets'. Nevertheless, it has made inroads in this area and each year 'silver bullets' are replaced with new houses.

Given the Territory's unique situation with respect to the number of traditional-oriented Aboriginal people and the movement back on to traditional lands, we have been trying for 7 years to get the Commonwealth government to accept that housing should be included in the package. To date, we have been unsuccessful. As well as housing, we have faced very high recurrent costs and the cost of other essential services for these very locations which have placed a burden on the Territory government's budget far in excess in real comparative terms to that borne by other states.

The plight of those teachers still living in 'silver bullets' is recognised and, in the next 3 years, many of these houses will be replaced.

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### In-service Induction Programs.

The induction process for teachers new to the Northern Territory is a gradual introduction encompassing 4 distinct phases with an emphasis on induction at the place of employment being the most effective and relevant process.

**Central Induction:** There are 2 formal programmed days for all recruits regardless of deployment. The program is designed to address broad 'pastoral care' issues giving an overview of departmental functions and highlighting many of the particular aspects of living and teaching in the Territory.

Recruits are usually in Darwin or Alice Springs in excess of a week during this period. The additional time is allowed for the numerous personal arrangements related to salary, banking, accommodation, permits, licences, removal and financial reimbursements arising from recruitment.

**Regional Induction:** Focuses on personal and professional aspects of teaching pertaining to that region, with specific attention on living and working on Aboriginal communities and in remote areas.

**School-Based Induction:** An intensive, vital and planned professional and personal introduction for newly appointed staff to relevant aspects of their daily workplace. This induction is to be closely aligned with probation.

**Induction Recall:** A program which recalls all new teachers working on communities or remote areas, after 10 weeks in the service, to their regional centres. The primary focus of the program is on curriculum development and teaching practices.

Mid-year recruitment presents a situation of balancing induction with the needs of the school to have the replacement teacher on duty. Wherever possible a reduced regional induction is actioned prior to the teacher reporting to the school.

Induction pre-reading material packages are provided for mid-year recruits and generally cover the issues addressed by the central induction program. New recruits who attend the induction program have always evaluated the program very highly.

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### Retention Rates.

Overall retention rates in the Northern Territory have continued to show an improvement and this indicates a more settled and experienced Northern Territory Teaching Service. The 1988 full-year figures indicate a general resignation rate of 14.9% which is a marked improvement on the 1986 rate of 22.6%. Teacher turnover rates in remote rural areas remain static.

The average appointment time in the Top End (1985 to 1987) was 3.5 years. The average appointment time in the southern region was 6 months. However, this is an aberration as there are less than 11 staff in remote southern schools and a very small number who were appointed to remote localities departed very quickly. This has had

an undesirable impact on the 'average length of stay' for the remaining staff. Overall retention rates are on a par with other states.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would also like to clear up a matter in relation to the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate. It needs to be clarified because there has been considerable comment, particularly in respect of its being offered at Yirara College. The JSSC is not simply a piece of paper. It is a course of secondary level education. To complete the JSSC, students must complete, English, maths, science, social science, health and physical education. They can add options such as home economics, arts etc. At Yirara College, only 25 students have ever undertaken any study at JSSC level. The only JSSC subject that they studied was level 3 maths. All other subjects taken by those students were at a lower post-primary level. Of the 25 who attempted maths 3 only, 7 obtained a C pass and 1 obtained a B pass. None of those 8 students who passed the maths 3 at JSSC level has completed a full JSSC. They must still complete English, science, social science, health and physical education at least.

The situation has been complicated by the decision of the Department of Education to allow Yirara to use blank JSSC forms to present the results achieved by the 25 involved. The way those certificates appear is misleading to anyone uninformed of the requirements of the Northern Territory JSSC approved curriculum. The process of using those certificates has been stopped. I repeat that the approved curriculum for the JSSC has never been taught at Yirara College. However, the government has moved to have the curriculum at Yirara properly accredited. It has done so through TAFE and TAFE certificates will apply from 1990.

There are 2 other matters that I would have liked to have discussed in detail but, unfortunately, time will not permit. During an adjournment debate early in these sittings, the member for Wanguri implied that the proposed amalgamation of the Northern Territory Secondary Correspondence School with the Northern Territory Open College of TAFE was another example of the lack of coordination between the minister and senior departmental staff. That is complete nonsense. I seek leave to incorporate in Hansard some remarks in relation to that question.

Leave granted.

The amalgamation of the Northern Territory Secondary Correspondence School with the Northern Territory Open College of TAFE was approved by the minister on 28 October 1989. Since this time, the Department of Education has been planning the implementation process and a working party has been established to plan the details of the amalgamation. There has been consultation with one of the main client groups, the Isolated Children's Parents Association.

It should be appreciated that, when an amalgamation occurs, even though this is a minor amalgamation of 2 sections within the Distance Education Branch of the department, there will be some staff who do not agree and the matter accordingly needs to be handled carefully with full involvement and consultation. The member for Wanguri is quite wrong that this amalgamation is in some way being rushed before the end of the year. Staff have already been advised that they will be eligible for a priority transfer during 1990 - in other words, should there be any staff who wish to leave, then they have a whole year to make other preferred arrangements.

The member for Wanguri is quite right, however, when he says there are significant implications for the staff and students of the Northern Territory Open College. These, essentially, are:

- ° it will bring greater benefits to students.
- ° the pooling of the expertise of the 2 institutions will strengthen the organisation - after all they are in the same branch, in the same building and share many common services already; and
- ° a major benefit will be that the outlets of the Open College can be more effectively used in places like Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and Elliott etc and in Community Education Centres throughout the Territory, thus enhancing the opportunities for Aboriginal people.

Nobody will lose their job.

Detailed staffing arrangements are a matter in the award restructuring process and, of course, this is a classical example of the applicability of the 'structural efficiency principle' in which existing staffing resources are better utilised to provide a better service to clients.

A key factor is the fact that the majority of students in both the Open College and the Secondary Correspondence School are adults. Another key fact is that the amalgamation will allow the Secondary Correspondence School to operate for 48 weeks in the year, a substantial benefit, particularly to adults, but also to those students who are hospitalised or in situations where the normal school year does not have any meaning.

The member for Wanguri also raised the question of unqualified staff. It is emphasised that no unqualified staff will be used in teaching secondary subjects.

Finally, far from trying to ferment staff discontent at this time of the year, given that the amalgamation is part of the award restructuring process and an application of the 'structural efficiency principle', the member for Wanguri should be adding his support to this positive step towards providing better services for Territorians.

Mr HARRIS: The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy Strategic Plan was raised in question time in the House of Representatives. The member for the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon, asked Hon John Dawkins a question in relation to Aboriginal education. I seek leave to incorporate in Hansard a response to that matter.

Leave granted.

I am surprised and somewhat disappointed that the federal minister has chosen to avoid the issue of adequate resourcing of traditional Aborigines under the AEP by imputing that I was seeking to shirk my responsibilities in regards to the education of Aborigines. I refer to his response in the House of Representatives on 22 November 1989 to a question from Warren Snowdon.

The federal minister referred to my statement in the Legislative Assembly on 21 November 1989. In that speech, I indicated: (1) my support for the direction of the National Aboriginal Education Policy; and (2) my support for the emphasis on consultation between governments.

The Northern Territory government has demonstrated its ongoing commitment to Aboriginal education. Our expenditure per capita is higher for Aboriginal students than non-Aborigines. We readily acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution in this area of education. However, my very real concern is that the Northern Territory will not get an adequate share of the \$33m being allocated under the program. The figure of \$33m is the actual amount of funding being provided over and above the ongoing funding from previous years.

My concerns are not voiced to take anything away from the federal minister's initiative, but arise from my past experience of Commonwealth distribution methods over a range of Commonwealth education programs in which the needs of Aborigines, and especially traditional Aborigines, are given only very limited consideration or even completely ignored.

The Commonwealth is well aware of these issues and so I presume is the federal minister. To demonstrate the validity of my claims, I will give 3 examples of Commonwealth programs that fail to give Aborigines their fair share of program funds.

In the English as Second Language program, not one cent was provided to accommodate Aborigines when they were given access to the program. This resulted in the Northern Territory having to try and accommodate 64% of Australia's non-English-speaking Aborigines within an already tiny allocation.

The Disadvantaged Schools Program, which targets the socioeconomically disadvantaged schools, has a formula that keeps some schools in the country which are significantly less disadvantaged on the program year after year whilst schools in very poor Aboriginal communities have to be rotated on and off because of the inequitable allocation of resources to the Northern Territory.

The Country Areas Program was introduced in 1982 to improve access to education for the geographically isolated. However, only token consideration is given to the most geographically isolated communities (which of course mainly consist of traditional Aborigines). The formula is so skewed that the Northern Territory received less than a quarter of the entitlement its isolated population should receive. Tasmania received almost the same amount of funding as the Northern Territory for its geographically isolated communities and Victoria gets four and a half times as much as the Northern Territory.

These issues have been repeatedly put to the Commonwealth along with Australian Bureau of Statistics data to support the Northern Territory arguments. Mr Snowdon himself has been briefed by my officers on the Disadvantaged Schools Program and is aware, or should be, of the anomalies in the other programs through his involvement on federal parliamentary committees on educational issues. Why has the

Commonwealth failed to address these glaring inequities and why has Mr Snowdon been silent on matters that are in the interest of Aboriginal Territorians?

I have continually tried to ensure that traditional Aborigines get a fair deal under Commonwealth programs whilst I have been Minister for Education. My concerns regarding the National Aboriginal Policy are well founded in precedent. The Northern Territory is meeting its obligations in the provision of education to Aborigines. No other state is faced to this same extent with the problems faced by the Northern Territory.

Let me focus the extent of these problems for you:

We have the most widely dispersed population in Australia, some of which are in localities which are extremely difficult to access.

Small population numbers prevent economies of scale.

64% of Australia's non-English-speaking Aborigines reside in the Northern Territory.

One third of our schoolchildren are Aborigines. 80% of these are traditional Aborigines.

These are the facts and everyone, including the Commonwealth, must take account of these facts when allocating resources.

I take this opportunity to again support the federal minister's initiative in introducing a National Aboriginal Policy. However, to ignore the special needs of the Northern Territory will significantly reduce the Aboriginal education program's credibility as a serious attempt to come to grips with the most difficult problems in Aboriginal education. All I am asking for is a fair deal for Aborigines, especially those who have been so very poorly dealt with in other Commonwealth programs.

Mr HARRIS: On a lighter note, Mr Deputy Speaker, could I say that I feel a little saddened that this is the last time that I will be speaking in this Legislative Assembly building. I think that these sittings should be dedicated to me and to education in particular. A fair amount of the time of these sittings has been taken up with matters relating to my portfolio. That does not particularly worry me because I believe that the more attention that you receive the greater the indication that you are doing your job reasonably well. I remember that Paul Everingham said that you really had not made the grade until you had been called on to resign. I have been called on to resign on a number of occasions. In fact, I did resign on 1 occasion, but not as a result of the opposition's calling for my resignation. Based on the Everingham interpretation of success, I feel that I have indeed been successful in my areas of responsibility. I will continue to try to educate the opposition in that regard.

This is the end of an era. This parliament has shaped the history of the Northern Territory in more ways than one. A huge volume of legislation has been passed through this Assembly and I am very honoured to have been involved in that process. Many interesting moments have occurred here since my election to this Assembly in 1977. An occasion that I will always remember

was when I was acting as Deputy Speaker to Les MacFarlane. We were sitting late and I had sent the attendant a note to contact my wife to say that I would not be home for dinner. When Les MacFarlane came back to relieve me in the Chair, he said: 'Tom, I will take over now. There is a message from your wife that the fritz is in the fridge'. I can recall that very clearly.

I would like to thank present and past staff for their efforts, in particular Keith Thompson, Ray Chin and Norm Gleeson who assisted me greatly when I first came into the Assembly.

In conclusion, yesterday during the matter of public importance discussion, I referred to Brian Ede as 'Bushfire Brian'. I received a transcript of a news report during the early hours of Thursday 30 November. I quote:

Educational arsonist, Brian Ede, said last night that NT schools were full of little bushfires. Minister Harris said that Bushfire Brian should cease his firebugging antics and that ex-teacher Opposition Leader, whose most positive contribution to the Education Department has been to leave it, should confiscate little Bushfire Brian's cigarette lighter and teach him how to be constructive. Bushfire Brian's only comment was: 'I love the smell of butane in the morning'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on that note, may I say that there have been moments when we have fought in this Assembly. It is all part of the democratic process which is very important. The government wants to ensure that there is full and frank debate. I believe that we give that opportunity to everyone here. I extend to Guy and all his staff and to all members of the Legislative Assembly my personal best wishes for Christmas. I hope that it is a merry and a safe one for all.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am particularly interested in the comment of the Minister for Education in relation to the measurement of success. I like his suggestion that success is measured by the amount of flak one attracts. I can relate to that in terms of what has happened during the year. I suppose we all can and I must bear my colleague's observation in mind.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will touch briefly on a couple of BTEC matters raised by the member for Stuart, not that I want to dwell too much on BTEC tonight. The first matter concerns banteng cattle. There are 2 feral herds of banteng, 1 of approximately 400 head north of Murgenella and the other, numbering more than 3000 head, on Cobourg Peninsula. In conjunction with the Conservation Commission and the management board of Gurig National Park, my department has gone to considerable trouble to ensure that the banteng herd on Cobourg Peninsula is protected. That has been done in the face of considerable pressure from the BTEC Committee and the industry because of the concern that all feral herds may harbour disease. That concern has led to an agreement that a certain percentage of the animals in the Cobourg region will be monitored each year so that, over a period of years, we can improve the status of those animals to the disease-free level. That probably answers the question in relation to the Cobourg animals.

As far as the 400 animals north of Murgenella are concerned, the department has been working very closely with the Northern Land Council and there is every likelihood that negotiations will be concluded successfully and a program initiated to carry the herds through until 1992. There will need to



be some monitoring and the securing or mustering of animals will be carried out in a manner approved by the landholders.

This is a fairly rare occasion, but I must take the opportunity to throw a few bouquets to the Northern Land Council and give credit where it is due. The NLC has been most cooperative in relation to the BTEC program over the years. There is an NLC representative on the Northern Territory BTEC Committee and his presence and the commitment of Aboriginal traditional owners have led to the BTEC program proceeding remarkably well on Aboriginal land. It is only fair that I make that comment in respect of the banteng cattle and other BTEC operations involving the NLC.

The member for Stuart asked for a deferral in relation to a couple of stations, 1 of which was Moroak. The fact is that deferral on 1 station has a negative impact on the possible improvement of the status of neighbouring stations and that can result in considerable tensions within particular regions. We have to look at the position on a regional basis. Moroak Station had an approved program this year. It estimated that it would be able to muster 1000 of the bush animals on the property and Tim MacFarlane told me the week before last that he had mustered something like 3000 animals. From the cash flow viewpoint referred to by the member for Stuart, he has achieved far in excess of what was anticipated. That is very good. I am pleased to say that it has occurred there because it reflects what we seek to achieve - the maximum utilisation of animals.

Mr Speaker, I want to move on to a couple of other points. The first relates to the new Parliament House which, I believe, will be welcomed when it is completed. I believe that it will be much more convenient for staff, members and ministers of the Assembly. This building has inherent problems in terms of dealing with people who come here. There is nowhere to sit down and have a private talk and, of course, staff experience difficulties in carrying out their duties. The new Parliament House is oriented towards the future and that is what we are all about. It is essential to respect and be aware of the past as the foundation on which we build the future, but we must project ourselves into the future. As we move towards and ultimately achieve statehood, we must have an appropriate parliamentary building which is capable of addressing the parliamentary and democratic needs of the Northern Territory well into the future. I am sure that the new Northern Territory Parliament House will fulfil that function when it is finally built.

A year or so ago, I visited the old Commonwealth Parliament House just before it closed following the final parliamentary sittings within its precincts. It was a very melancholy occasion which brought to mind all the great people who had passed through the House, including great Prime Ministers, great ministers and great members of the House. The same applies to this building, as other honourable members have indicated. As I say, that history simply enriches our vision for the future and is something on which we can build.

I would also like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Hansard and Legislative Assembly staff and, indeed, other members of the House, for their cooperation throughout the year. I would also like to thank the staff in my office who have been extremely committed and helpful to me. I am very appreciative of their efforts. I also thank the Parliamentary Counsel and his staff, and officers of all departments. I would particularly like to thank the officers of my department who have given me a great deal of support during the year. I am very appreciative of the assistance given by all officers in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries and the officers of the

Department of Correctional Services, for which I have recently taken responsibility.

Mr Speaker, I would like to touch on a couple of memorable occasions which have occurred during the year. If I had to give an award for the most memorable occasion, it would go to the member for Stuart for his call for the protection of blue cows, polka dot cows, steel grey cows or whatever cows they might be. It was very courageous of him to go on national radio and support the cause of the blue cows. If he gets the award, he really should share it with the wag who set him up to do it, as I indicated earlier. All is not lost for the honourable member, Mr Speaker, because I have been supplied with a picture of a blue cow. Blue cows exist, if only in fairytales, so there is still some hope for the member for Stuart. I table this fine depiction of a blue cow, something I am sure the member for Stuart will be proud of.

The second prize for the most memorable occasion of the year goes to the Leader of Government Business. Earlier in the year, when the Chief Minister was in full flight delivering his speech on the Fitzgerald Inquiry, the Leader of Government Business came into the Chamber. He had just received some news in relation to a fellow who was having a few problems with his chooks. The Leader of Government Business, myself and the Chief Minister had been discussing the matter over a considerable period. The Leader of Government Business wrote a quick note to the Chief Minister saying: 'The chooks are okay'. He handed it to the Chief Minister who was totally perplexed and distracted from his cause. He commented later that it was no wonder that he was a bit distracted from his cause and a bit perplexed from time to time when he had interruptions of that nature. Therefore, the second prize goes to the Leader of Government Business and member for Palmerston. Certainly, it should be on the public record that the chooks are okay. It has become part of the folklore in this place and certainly should be recorded.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all members, the staff of the Legislative Assembly and the Hansard staff a Merry Christmas. I look forward to working with them again in the coming year.

#### MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This afternoon, the Leader of the Opposition raised a matter of privilege. I advise honourable members that, on 27 October 1989, I wrote to the Chief Minister concerning sitting dates for 1990. In that letter, I referred to undertakings given by the Leader of Government Business that the Assembly would sit for an additional 3 days in 1990. I was informed that the Leader of Government Business and the Clerk had discussed the proposed sitting dates prior to the government forwarding them to me for my consideration and that it had been decided to hold the additional sitting days when the workload of the Assembly created the most need for them. Under these circumstances, I agreed to the proposed dates.

Perhaps I was remiss in not advising honourable members of this fact in my memorandum of today's date. I did not anticipate the resulting furore and honourable members are aware that the agreed sitting dates, to some extent, are indicative and are subject to change. Indeed, the sessional order empowering the Speaker to vary sitting dates and times envisages this. Therefore, I do not believe that the Leader of Government Business misled either the Standing Orders Committee or the Assembly, and I do not intend to refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges.

Mr COULTER (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise to participate in the adjournment debate this evening. I am particularly aware of the fact that this is the last sitting in this building and I would like to add my tribute to those people who have served in this Chamber before us. I would like to draw a comparative analysis between the people of this parliament and other parliamentarians throughout Australia, in particular the national parliament and the federal government of Australia. I believe that this parliament is the most dynamic parliament in Australia.

Mr Smith: Oh, come on.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition interjects. There is more work done in this parliament in 30 days than elsewhere and more legislation is produced for the welfare of the people of the Northern Territory. This parliament produces meaningful legislation which provides people of the Northern Territory with opportunities and resolutions of conflict. This legislation is brought into action, through the Northern Territory Public Service and the other bureaucracies which have been established in the Northern Territory, faster than elsewhere in Australia. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to dispute that, then let him stand outside and say that. However, let me try to demonstrate where I believe that the great strengths of this parliament lie.

The Chief Minister referred to the names of previous members of this parliament. If we look at the vocations of those people, it will give us great insight into the people who were in this Chamber over the years. We will note that we have not been invaded by lawyers as has been the case with the Senate. I note that a previous Senator for the Northern Territory and a previous Speaker in this Chamber are present in the gallery this evening. In 1950-51, there were 5 lawyers in the federal parliament and, in 1980, there were 26. That is a huge increase in the number of lawyers in that parliament.

Let us go through the elected members of this House from 1947 to 1971 by occupation. Mr Frederick Austin was an agent. Mr Thomas Bell was a farmer. Mrs Linda Berlowitz was a company director. Mr Braitling was a pastoralist. Mr Brennan was a prospector. Mr Callinan was an engineer. Mr Carroll was a waterside worker. Mr Chan was a company director. Mr Cooper was a manager. Mr Dowling was a works supervisor. Mr Drysdale was a director, and I remember Fred Drysdale and I recall some of his features very well. I am not sure what this refers to in terms of his directorship, but a director he was. Mr William Joseph Fisher was a mining engineer. Mr Fulton was a hotel and storekeeper. Mr Greatorex was an agent, and Mr Hargrave was a solicitor. We have to go a long way before we reach the first solicitor.

Mr Hopkins was a business manager. Mr Izod was a motor engineer, and indeed I remember Mr Izod as a lecturer at Kormilda College. Mr Johnson was a plumber. Mr Kentish was a farmer, and what a farmer he was! Mr Speaker, you could put a lot of names on Mr Kentish. I remember sitting on my corner fence post talking to Rupert Kentish because, in the days when I moved to my block, I could not afford a ...

Mr SPEAKER: Pastoralist, milk herder, dairy farmer.

Mr COULTER: Yes, he was an entrepreneur extraordinaire and he established many things first in Darwin including one of the Northern Territory's first dairies. What a great man. Mr Kilgariff, Bernard Francis himself, is listed here as a motel manager, but we remember him best, other than in his role as a Senator, as a chook farmer.

Mr Perron: No.

Mr COULTER: No?

Mr Perron: No, as a member of this Assembly.

Mr COULTER: As a member of this Assembly, of course, and as a man of many talents. He is now continuing to contribute to the development of the Northern Territory of Australia as a pastoralist.

Mr Matthew Luke was a foreman. Mr Lyons was a barrister and solicitor, our second solicitor. Mr MacFarlane loved his station at Moroak, and he rests in peace on that station today. In fact, I understand only 2 previous members of this Legislative Assembly have passed away since 1947.

Mr SPEAKER: Since 1974.

Mr COULTER: Mr Eric Lyall Marks was a bookmaker. Mr Murray was a miner. Mr Nelson was an Alice Springs pastoralist. Mr Orr was a carpenter. Mr Petrick was a pastoralist. Mr Purkiss was a miner. Mr Richardson was the manager of Mataranka Homestead. Thomas Matthew Ronan was a farmer and author. Alfred Lionel Rose was a veterinary surgeon. When I lived in Papua New Guinea, I used to play for the Colonel Rose Trophy on Dunphy Station in the middle of the Markham Valley. It was a polocrosse trophy. I would psyche myself to die for the Colonel Rose Trophy. It was not until I came to the Northern Territory that I found out who Colonel Rose was. Of course, Mr Speaker, Colonel Rose had visited Dunphy on many occasions and Dunphy Station was owned by Barbara and Bruce Jeffcott. Bruce Jeffcott is now deceased. He was killed on the Markham Highway last year in a motor vehicle accident. Both Barbara and Bruce Jeffcott served under Colonel Rose and Goff Letts at that time doing veterinary work. In fact, I believe that Bruce Jeffcott was an agronomist although I may be corrected on that. Certainly, Barbara was a veterinarian at the time, and Goff Letts, of course, was there with them.

Mr Smith was a pastoralist and Mr Ward was a barrister, our third lawyer. Mr Waters was a company director. Mr Watts was a timekeeper, Mr Webster was a medical practitioner, our first doctor, and Mr Withnall was another barrister, our fourth lawyer.

If we turn to the members after 1971, there was Ms Elizabeth Andrew and Mr John Bailey who was elected recently. Mr Ballantyne is a previous member. I do not have their occupations, but I am sure that we are all familiar with them. They are ordinary people who wanted to represent the people of their electorates, and they were chosen to do that. Mr Denis Collins was a prominent school teacher. He did not become a principal, but he was a science teacher of some note. Barry Coulter was a motor mechanic. Mr Dondas was a shopkeeper and a sandwich-maker of some note. Mr Dale was at various times a policeman, a greyhound track entrepreneur and an insurance officer. Mr Doolan also had a variety of occupations and I am not sure how best Jack would describe himself. June D'Rozario was a town planner. Brian Ede is a man who may describe himself in many ways. Mr Everingham had a legal background and was our fifth legal representative. Frederick Finch is an engineer. Mr Firmin has done a variety of things in his life including insurance work. Mr Floreani is an accountant of some note. Mr Hanrahan is a real estate salesman extraordinaire and has done a number of other jobs. Tommy Harris is an entrepreneur extraordinaire who owns the Star Village. He was born and has his roots in the Northern Territory. Mr Hatton, of course, was involved in

industrial relations for a great deal of his life in the Northern Territory. Mr Isaacs lost his seat to the Leader of the Opposition in a by-election in 1981 and he is now working in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in New South Wales.

Mr Smith: Not any more, he isn't.

Mr COULTER: He used to be. There has been a change of government.

Mr Speaker, Mr Lanhupuy is an Aboriginal person from the Arnhem region of the Northern Territory. Dawn Lawrie was from Nightcliff. She was an independent member and was deeply involved in a wide range of social issues. Mr Leo was a bus driver in Nhulunbuy, I understand, before he entered parliament as a member of the opposition. Goff Letts is a great man who has a background in primary production and veterinary science. Mr McCarthy is a great man who worked with Aboriginal people over 20 years. He came here as a lay missionary and met Bishop O'Loughlin. At the state funeral for Bishop O'Loughlin, we all remember hearing Terry McCarthy's story of how he came to the Northern Territory and what he has done for the Northern Territory. Mr Manzie was a police sergeant in the traffic branch and an officer of some note. Mr Oliver is still involved in local government in Alice Springs. Pam O'Neil has now left the Northern Territory and has a career in relation to equal opportunities. Noel Padgham-Purich - who could ever forget her? She arrived here with a Morris 1000 full of goats, ducks and cats, and they were all pregnant. She has not changed very much to this day in terms of her unceasing efforts to promote the Northern Territory and, in particular, primary industry.

Mr Speaker, Michael Palmer was born in the Northern Territory, educated elsewhere and came back to educate us all. He is still here now. Neville Perkins left Alice Springs and went off to the big smoke to go into business. Mr Perron was a tally clerk at the wharf some 20 years ago. There was Mr David Pollock. We also have Mr Eric Poole from the tourism industry. Michael Reed was a Conservation Commission employee for some time. Who could ever forget Jimmy Robertson? He had been a legal clerk, but would be remembered most as an excellent Leader of Government Business in this Assembly. Roger Ryan was a motor mechanic who now lives in Hobart. He is a great man. Rick Setter was the orange juice salesman of the world. He has also been involved with electrical fittings and a number of other occupations.

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

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Deputy Chief Minister from completing his remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr COULTER: I thank the House for its indulgence. It is very unusual for an adjournment speech to be extended other than for the member for MacDonnell.

Terence Edward Smith was a school teacher and a union representative who made it to the big time. Roger Steele was a fencer who went wrong, became involved in insurance and ended up as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. He is now residing in Queensland as the director of the Stockman's Hall of Fame. Grant Tambling has had a number of jobs including that of insurance salesman. He has been and is a great defender of the Northern Territory against all detractors. Stanley Tipiloura was the Northern Territory's first Aboriginal person to graduate as a policeman.

That great soft drink salesman from downtown Tennant Creek, Ian Lindsay Tuxworth, has contributed to the Northern Territory in many ways. Roger Vale, chook farmer and train driver extraordinaire, became Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and has contributed to the development of the Northern Territory. He is 1 of the 4 remaining of the class of '74.

What I am trying to demonstrate is that this is a dynamic parliament which is made up of grassroots people. It has a diversity unknown in any other parliament in Australia. That is where our great strength lies. We make many mistakes in this Chamber, but at least we have the conviction and the strength of Northern Territorians behind us to deal with many of the problems that affect us on a day-to-day basis. By contrast, in the federal parliament from 1950-51, there were 5 lawyers. In 1980, there were 26 and the Clerk tells me that he can remember a time when there were 14 lawyers in the Senate. In 1950-51, there were 11 white collar members in the federal parliament and, in 1980, there were 31. In 1950-51, there were 13 trade union officials and, in 1980, there were 10. There are diminishing numbers of trade union members and one can see clearly from the graph the demise of the trade union.

In 1950-51, there were 6 farmers in the Senate and, in 1980, there were 17. In 1950-51, there were 7 pastoralists and 12 in 1980. There were 4 teachers in 1950-51. In 1958-61, there were 10 teachers and, by 1980, their number had fallen to 3. Teachers are definitely not the flavour of the month as representatives of the people. From 1950-75, there were no ex-military representatives in the Senate. The military's first representative arrived in 1975. In 1972, there were 3 such representatives and there had been 1 in 1949-51.

We have 1 woman in the Legislative Assembly at present. In 1950-51, there were 4 women in the Senate and it reached a maximum of 10 in 1981. In the House of Representatives, there was 1 woman in 1951. After that, there were none until 1969. There was also 1 in 1977 and 1983.

What I have tried to point out this evening is that the parliament that I have been particularly proud to be part of over the years is made up of grassroots people who care and who have the confidence of their electors who have sent them here to make the Northern Territory a better place to live. I thank every one of them for all that they have done for me and my family and for the kids of the future. Mr Deputy Speaker, may I wish all the other children of the Northern Territory who are coming up through the ranks the same opportunities.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to add my contribution to this debate as one of the new boys to the parliament and to give members an idea of how I have found things over the last 12 months. I would also like to express my appreciation to the many people who are involved in the Assembly and in the whole political process.

Over the last 20 years or so, I have been involved in a large number of different businesses and have employed many people. I realise that the success of any organisation depends largely on the effort of the staff in that organisation. The members of this Assembly are 25 people who are at the top of the pyramid in respect of politics in the Northern Territory. Underneath us, there are a large number of people who provide valuable contributions and allow us to carry out necessary functions as representatives of the people.

I would like to mention in particular some of the staff here. Whilst I would not have missed the experience of my political career so far, it

certainly has not been a home away from home. However, the staff in this Assembly have tried to make it that way for me. Without fear of contradiction, I can say that I have been supported and assisted whenever I have needed it. The Hansard staff, Gay and her staff in the library, and Ron and his band of merry men, have really supported me. The staff of the various ministers and of the Australian Labor Party have been very good to me. Certainly, I have no cause for complaint and I sincerely thank them. I believe that the press representatives play a valuable role in this Assembly. I must say that they have been very gentle with me and I guess I should be thankful for that.

In respect of my parliamentary colleagues, whilst things have not always been rosy, I appreciate that they have functions to perform as I hope they appreciate that I have a duty to perform certain functions according to how I see things. I would also like to thank them for the assistance they have given me. I wish everyone a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. I mean that genuinely, particularly to the staff of the Assembly.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am among those who have no regrets whatsoever about the demise of this building. I have long held the view that, when a building has outlived its usefulness, it ought to go. Unless it has some intrinsic value, there is no justification for hanging on to it. The feeling which a number of people have about times they have spent in a building are not sufficient justification. I guess we feel the same about this building perhaps as we feel about our first home. The first home you buy is something to remember. You settle down in it and perhaps start a family. Although it is hard to leave a first home, it is not impossible and you perhaps move on to bigger and better things. Mr Deputy Speaker, that is what we are about to do. We are about to move out of an obsolete and worn-out building. Even the interim location will be better able to cater for the workings of this parliament and, certainly, will be more suitable for the staff who have had to operate in this facility over the years.

One of the arguments used by the opponents of the new Parliament House project is that the building is only used for 30 days of the year. That is simply not true. This particular Chamber is used for parliamentary sittings on 30 days of the year, but it is also used on other special occasions which occur throughout the year. The remainder of the facility is used for the same number of days as every other public service building in the Territory. It is used throughout the year and, in fact, the facilities which the Clerk and his staff have had to work in for many years are unsuitable.

Honourable members may recall how, during the final sittings of last year, we had plastic buckets on desks and in the middle of the floor to catch the drips as they came through the ceiling. For the last 3 days, we have been without air-conditioning because the building is dying. In fact, I think that it has been dead for some time. It has managed to struggle on for a few extra years because people keep breathing a little bit of life into it - just enough to keep it going. Every Christmas, a fresh coat of paint goes over all the cracks where the paint has peeled because of the water running through during the wet season. This building is very costly to maintain and certainly is not an appropriate venue for a parliament in a place like the Northern Territory.

I would like to refer to a visit I paid to Sarawak a few years ago. I have an affinity for Sarawak. In many ways, it is just like the Territory. I was staying at a hotel on the banks of the Kuching River, watching a thong floating among other debris moved along by the tide and looking across at a

magnificent golden building opposite the hotel. I wondered what it could be. Some time later, a minister of the Sarawak government took me to the building in the course of a visit to places of interest. He said: 'That is our Parliament House'. I said: 'It is a magnificent building. You should see ours. This puts us to shame. How often do you sit?' 'We sit once a year in order to pass the budget,' he replied. We are accused of not sitting enough days in the Northern Territory! I had some affinity for his ideas and I thought that the building was quite appropriate. I look forward to the move from this building. It has outlived its useful life and I look forward to working in the interim Parliament House which will be a far superior venue and will serve the purposes of the parliament of the Northern Territory far better.

Mr Deputy Speaker, while on my feet, I will join the Chief Minister in paying tribute to former members and staff of this Assembly. I do not know as many of them as the Chief Minister and other honourable members who have served for longer periods in this House than I have. I am reminded of the fact that, in 3 days time, it will be 6 years since I was first elected. A number of other honourable members were elected to this House on that day, although some of us did not know it for a few days. On 3 December 1983, quite a number of people became members of this House for the first time.

During this adjournment debate, many members have talked about some of the more momentous debates in this House. I am not going to repeat their comments. I tend to remember the ceremonious occasions. To me, one of the most memorable of those was when I was first sworn in as a member of this House. On that first day, I was rather in awe of the place and the people in it and was wondering what in the hell I had done. Anyway, I have survived for 6 years and I hope to continue as a member for many more years.

Another ceremonious occasion has been referred to already by the Deputy Chief Minister. To me, the special sitting held for the state funeral of Bishop John O'Loughlin was one of the most inspiring days in this parliament. That day will always stay in my memory, summing up my recollections of the people who have come through this House and those who were present on that day.

I would also like to thank the Clerk and all of the staff of this Assembly. They toil under very difficult circumstances throughout the year in obsolete buildings in which water drips and the air-conditioning breaks down regularly. They do so with very little complaint. It is time those people had the chance to work in better conditions. I would also like to pay tribute to my own staff and the staff of my department for their efforts throughout the year and their continuing support for me and for the government. It is difficult to praise them highly enough. Often they toil long days for me. They are prepared to be around when they are wanted and they never complain when they are called, often at odd hours. I wish to commend them very sincerely.

I also wish the joy and peace of Christmas to all members and staff of this Assembly and the people sitting in the gallery. I hope that everybody will have a very happy and productive 1990. I believe it will be a productive year for the Northern Territory. I think the Territory is turning the corner and that its economy is likely to improve. The hard work of the government during the last 12 months, in turning around what has been a very bad time for all of Australia, is about to pay dividends and I trust that all Territorians will enjoy the benefits of that throughout 1990.



Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I rise firstly to lend my support to the sentiments expressed by the honourable minister. I certainly agree that, once a building outlives its useful purpose, it should be knocked over. My sentiments about this building do not differ from those expressed by the minister. There is nothing particularly significant about this building other than the fact that it once housed the Legislative Council and has more recently housed the Legislative Assembly. I would also like to place on record my appreciation of the work of the staff of the Assembly and the cooperation which I have received throughout the year from my colleagues. I wish them all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Because I am an erudite sort of chap who is prone to reading various journals and books and because I am a humble chap as well, a characteristic one does not normally associate with politicians, I thought it would be interesting to see what symptoms displayed by honourable members could be explained by the terminology in the medical dictionary. Not wanting to leave myself out, I found that it is possible to describe a person as 'palmitic' which means 'running to fat' or 'tending towards fat'. Another interesting condition is 'leontiasis' which refers to a condition which involves the thickening of the bones in the skull. I will not expand on that at all. 'Bell's palsy' is another interesting affliction. It refers to a neurological problem, the manifestation of which leaves people with hearing problems so that they sometimes speak loudly and sometimes softly. I am not saying that the member for MacDonnell suffers from Bell's palsy in any way although one could be forgiven for suspecting it sometimes.

I also came across a condition which is called 'edentulous' which means 'lacking in teeth'. Although the member for Stuart is prone to bark, rant and rave, much of his contribution to debate definitely lacks teeth. Some honourable members refer to the member for Stuart as Cyanide Sam. I am not one of those honourable members who uses that term in some unkind moments. In the medical dictionary, I came across a condition called cyanosis, one of whose effects is to cause the sufferer to see things in a shade of blue. For some months, I had grappled with the problem of the blue cows and the polka dot cows before I found that plausible and rational explanation in the medical dictionary provided to me by the good Minister for Health and Community Services. The member for Stuart is indeed suffering from cyanosis.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS  
Mr Harry Giese and Mr Jack Doolan

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I draw to the attention of honourable members the presence in the gallery of a former member of the Legislative Council, Mr Harry Giese, and a former member of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Jack Doolan. I ask members to join with me in giving a warm welcome to both those former members.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, firstly, I too would like to express my appreciation to all the staff of the Legislative Assembly, especially for the time and effort they have spent helping me during the year. I would like to extend my best wishes to all present and previous members of this House and to friends and their families for a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

When I first came to this House 3 years ago, in 1987, I was very nervous. I still am as I stand here tonight, but I can see changes in this Assembly and, hopefully, we will get more new members in the next term. We have

members from different backgrounds, with different upbringings, who come from many different places in Australia. Most of the members of this House grew up in the Territory and have their heart and soul in the Territory, and that is another good example set by members of this House. Many of our members are willing to work and put their efforts towards trying to develop this community and make it a really good environment for all the people of the Territory. I would like to thank my electorate staff, my single staff member, Mrs Nuala McDonald, who has helped me throughout the year and has been of great assistance to me personally. Once again, I thank the Clerks and the staff of this House and all members of the Assembly.

Secondly, I wish to pay my tribute to a person who died recently. He is one of the traditional owners in the Kakadu area and his name is Toby Gangele. He died at the age of 60. He was one of the senior traditional owners of the Kakadu, Mt Brockman, Mudginberri area that includes Jabiru and Ranger. Mr Gangele was a man of great knowledge, especially of Aboriginal culture and also in regard to mining in the Territory. He made a great contribution to the Territory economy, especially in connection with uranium mining in the Kakadu area. Mr Gangele was a member of the Gagadju Association. He was a crocodile hunter, contract buffalo shooter, safari guide, truck driver and a plant operator and, lastly, he was employed by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service as a cultural adviser. Mr Gangele will be greatly missed by the people in that area and I am sure that honourable members will join me in sending condolences to his family and friends in the Kakadu area.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Speaker, Mr Gangele was a senior elder of the area. I did not know him personally, but I met him on a number of occasions during my visits to Jabiru. He had extensive knowledge of that country. He had knowledge of that country, about the mining and the history of his people in the area. I was very interested in hearing about his early days, especially when he was a crocodile hunter and a buffalo shooter. He was saying how hard it was to work in the Kakadu region in the early days, but there were plenty of crocodiles and other wildlife there.

Those of you who have been around the Kakadu region know that the area is still one of the prettiest in the world, and it is a nice part of this country to visit. Mr Gangele and his people have done a magnificent job of looking after that area for the past 40 000 years. He has done it proud, for himself and for his people in that area. The people of Kakadu will miss him sadly, as I am sure all the people in the Territory will.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, before I move on to my concluding remarks, I would like to endorse the sentiments of my honourable colleague who paid tribute to Toby Gangele. I had the very good fortune to make a trip to America and Canada in 1980 with Johnny Lee and Toby Gangele and the present member for Arnhem, Wes Lanhupuy, to look at the possibility of mining uranium on traditional Indian lands and in national parks. It was a chance to get to know Toby Gangele very well. He was a great ambassador for the Northern Territory, for Australia and for his people. I will never forget that trip. In fact, I have devoted 2 chapters of my book to the trip and some of the antics that the people got up to and I am sure that, at some stage in the future, it will find its way to the printers.

A night like this is generally the time when we tell tales about the good times we have had and the laughs we have had and, normally, they are all at someone else's expense. As I look back, the funniest things that happened all

happened to someone else. However, I would like to place on record a humorous incident in which the laugh was on me. It probably escaped the notice of a few members. Some years ago, I was sitting in the chair where the member for Sadadeen is now sitting. At the time, I was the Minister for Primary Production. A debate was in full flight and I had had a fair bollocking from the Leader of the Opposition, Bob Collins, over some issue. When my turn to speak came, I rose from my chair and I was about to give him as much as I had received.

I was in full flight and, on the other side of the Chamber, the Speaker called the attendant over. The attendant had only been in the job for a week at the most. The Speaker whispered in the attendant's ear and the attendant came and stood in that little space there. I knew that he wanted to talk to me, but I did not want to talk to him because I had my sights set on the Leader of the Opposition. However, the attendant would not go away and, eventually, I turned to him and said, 'What's the matter?'. In a husky whisper, he said: 'Your fly is undone'. I could not catch what he said. I thought it could not be important and kept on talking. He still did not go away and, eventually, he was getting on my nerves. I turned around and said, 'What is the matter?'. Once again, he muttered: 'Your fly is undone'. I did not understand him a second time and, once again, I ignored him. Eventually, however, I could take it no longer. I stopped and said: 'What is the matter?' Loudly and clearly, he said: 'Your fly is undone!' I did not miss a stroke. I pulled up my fly and kept on going. I have had great respect for that Assembly attendant ever since for his persistence. He was not going to be put off because I did not want to talk to him. He had an important message from the Speaker and I was going to get it.

During the course of the last couple of weeks, I have been reflecting on some of the great personalities who have been in the Assembly since the class of '74 was elected. There have been some very imposing personalities and the one who really won the accolade from me was the member for Eley, Les MacFarlane. Les MacFarlane brought a presence and a dignity to the Speakership that I do not think has been rivalled since his departure. In his own quiet way, he also had a very quick wit. Mr Speaker, you may recall the day that the member for Eley was sitting in that Chair controlling the debate in the House. The situation had become a little out of control and he was being challenged on the standing orders by the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Isaacs. Les turned around and said: 'Young fellow, honourable Leader of the Opposition, I am not quite sure what is in standing orders. Right now, we are operating under Katherine rules of debate and, if you do not like it, you have a few choices available to you'. The member for Eley was a big man. He had a presence about him. He dealt with intransigent members from time to time in a way that we all thought was very fair and we respected him for it. His departure from the House turned out to be a great loss to the House. From time to time, he did something that made us all feel a bit savage. He refused to surrender his right to speak on behalf of the people of Katherine and he would come down from the Chair and sit in that corner. When the moment was right, he would rise to his feet and we would all get it. A good point about him was that he did not have any favourites and we all copped it from time to time.

The work of this House is something that is generally not appreciated in the community and, from time to time, it is easy to understand why. However, I think it is fair to say that all members in this House have their heart in the right place and their motives are good. In fact, looking back over the years, I cannot recall one person who has been in this place who came for the ride and who lived the life of a lush. Every one of them has worked in his or

her own way to contribute to the good government of the Territory and to represent the people who elected them.

In closing, I think it is important to place on record my appreciation to the staff of the Assembly, the Clerk of the House, who is always available for assistance, the Hansard people who are cooperative, and the staff in Mr Petrides' section who have the job of ensuring that the members of parliament obtain the things that they need in order to do their job well. In the years that I have had close contact with them, I cannot recall any time when I was let down by a member of staff forgetting something or failing to make something happen. Tonight is a night when I place on record my thanks and gratitude - and I know that I can speak for others - for a job well done.

In the last 2 or 3 months, we have all started to wind down a bit in anticipation of this day. I have started to take it a bit quietly myself. I went home last Thursday night thinking that I had not earned my pay because I had not been in a scrap all week. It was a pretty depressing feeling. I am looking forward to the New Year. We will have a new ball game and other opportunities and I am sure that the new environment of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly will provide us with the opportunity to do the job that is expected of us in the way that people would have us do it.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I might say a few words from the Chair in view of the fact that I have been a member of this Assembly since 1974. I would like to read to honourable members a letter from a former member of this Assembly, Dr Goff Letts. It reads:

Dear Mr Speaker,

Your kind invitation to attend the last rights of the old bull ring reached me today. Unfortunately, due to the short notice, distance and especially my impecuniosity, I am obliged to submit my apology.

I recall when the Legislative Council moved from the Sidney Williams hut to this building. It has served the Territory well. Before air-conditioning, when the western wall was louvered, interjections from the verandah could occasionally be heard. Disorder in the Stranger's Gallery caused suspension of business on at least 2 occasions. Members' conduct was generally reasonable with only one suspension from the service of the council deemed necessary prior to 1974.

The old Chamber witnessed many landmark debates during the struggle to wrest a degree of independence from Canberra - stirring days - and, immediately after the Cyclone Tracy, it housed one of the most extraordinary parliamentary meetings ever held. For over 30 years, it was a forum where some of the most colourful, able and dedicated Territorians gathered to save this unique region. It holds some of the most poignant memories of my life. The excitement of moving towards greater autonomy and into new surroundings will not mask the truth that more than bricks and mortar are needed to meet further challenges. The traditions associated with the old bull ring should not be overlooked in the new building for they are an essential part of the Territory's identity and help to reinforce the Assembly's sense of purpose.

Congratulations on the move and best wishes for the future to you, members and all Territorians.

Yours sincerely,  
Goff Letts.

I would like to join with other members this evening to thank all the staff of this Assembly: the Clerks, Hansard, librarians, gardeners and attendants. Before 1974, in the days of the Legislative Council, there were very few staff. Nevertheless, I believe that all members of staff have played their part in cementing a strong parliament.

Former members met outside this afternoon. There were 23 former members of the Legislative Assembly prior to the last election. With the other 25 members, including myself, sitting in the parliament today, that means that some 48 members of parliament have played a role in the constitutional development and the building of the Northern Territory. I believe that the people of the Northern Territory owe a debt of gratitude to the former members and the current members. Most honourable members of the class of '74 will remember that the parliamentary salary in 1974 was very unlike the parliamentary salary today. In fact, I would remind former members and current members that the parliamentary salary in 1974 was \$7500 per year. I do not think anybody could say that the members of the Legislative Assembly went into politics for the money. It certainly was not a lot.

In respect of the class of '74, Frank Alcorta can never get it right. He talks about the Legislative Council when he means the Legislative Assembly and vice versa. I read an article today in which he was talking about former members and former staff of the Assembly. I regret to say that, in that article, he included the member for Port Darwin among the class of '74. The only members of the class of '74 who are in this parliament today are the member for Barkly, the member for Braiiting, the member for Fannie Bay and myself. We are what could be called the old guard. I think that it is a very proud old guard. If we had not set the direction and paved the way in 1974, obviously there would not be too many members here in 1989, especially on the CLP side.

The new Parliament House has come in for some criticism over the last 6 to 9 months. The Director of the NT Museum of Arts and Sciences, Dr Colin Jack-Hinton, was with us earlier today. I was the Minister for Community Development at the time when we found the funds to build a new museum and art gallery. There was an outcry from the opposition benches in the Assembly. The opposition cried that it was a waste of money, that it should not be built, that Hollands was in the pocket of the CLP etc. However, when the building was opened, the people of Darwin recognised it as a beautiful facility and took it to heart. They accepted that we needed facilities such as that if we were to progress towards our final constitutional development of statehood.

I have just noticed another former member of another parliament here tonight. I refer to Sam Calder. In his own way, as Silent Sam in the mid-1960s, he proudly assisted the Territory in its steps towards constitutional change. If it were not for people like Sam Calder, Dick Ward and many others, I do not believe that the Legislative Council would have taken that next constitutional step of becoming a Legislative Assembly. Tonight, I ask honourable members to join with me in offering warm thanks to Mr Sam Calder for the part that he has played in constitutional development in the Northern Territory.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr SPEAKER: One of the best aspects of being Speaker is that you do not have the clock put on you. Nevertheless, I have been watching very carefully to ensure that I do not go over time. I would like to offer my parliamentary colleagues, the Clerk and his staff and all my friends the very best wishes for Christmas.

I will now call on the member for MacDonnell to present his SPIEL awards. For those people who have never heard the member for MacDonnell present his SPIEL awards, I indicate that they are in for a treat. I hope that no honourable member will find it necessary to remind me of the time available to the member for MacDonnell, who intends giving me a very large serve. I do not mind. If the cap fits, wear it. I now call on the member for MacDonnell.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, thank you very much. It is probably appropriate that this year's awards of the Society for the Prevention of Injury to the English Language be dignified with a speech from the dispatch box.

Mr SPEAKER: I think the honourable member should ask for leave to be granted. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, you have put the weights on me in that regard because I am not sure whether the competition is up to the standard of previous years. Whether that is the case or not will soon become apparent.

Before I pass on to the society's awards for this year, I would like to make a few serious remarks at the beginning of my speech rather than at the end. I would like to echo some of the thoughts expressed by other honourable members in relation to this building. When I first came to work here as a newly-elected member in 1981, I felt very proud because of the place this building has occupied in the history of this country. Regardless of the controversies about the new Parliament House, I hope and trust that the new parliament will reflect the history of conflict which Darwin has known and the place of this building in the psyche of all Australians. The spirit of this parliament and the people who contributed to it in the past will always continue, whether the parliament is located in a Sidney Williams hut, the new Parliament House or even, dare I say, Mr Speaker, in the Chan Building.

The other thing I would like to do before moving on to the SPIEL awards is to pass on the compliments of the season, as well as my thanks, to the staff of the Assembly and to my colleagues. I very much appreciate the assistance that I have received from the staff of the Assembly, particularly the Clerk, the library staff, the Hansard staff and the clerical staff.

Mr Speaker, this year's SPIEL awards have been arranged in various categories: the general vocabulary category, a fairly slim syntactic category, the time-honoured TTT or Territory Tautological Tournament, the new casual observers' section, as well as 2 other new sections which will be the subject of honourable mentions if not awards - the honest truth section and the 3M prize which will go to the Master of the Mixed Metaphor.

Let us begin with the first entry in the general vocabulary category which comes from the Chief Minister. The egret, Mr Speaker, is a little bird that we see at Kakadu and various other places. When I heard the Chief Minister

refer earlier during these sittings to 'egrets facilities', I thought that he must have been referring to an aviary for water birds. When I listened more closely, I discovered that he was referred to facilities in backpackers' accommodation and that what he meant to say was 'egress facilities' or exit facilities. That was a good, quality entry.

Mr Speaker, as you have said yourself, you have had your own entries this year. Lest I be accused of blasphemy, I should point out my belief that morning prayers in this Assembly can be reasonably regarded as fair game for the SPIEL awards. As honourable members are aware, we daily urge the Almighty to direct and prosper our deliberations. Mr Speaker, you expressed the purpose of thus exhorting the Almighty, not once but twice earlier in these sittings as being for 'the advancement, the glory and the true welfare of the people of the Northern Territory'. I thought about that and it occurred to me that I see no tangible evidence, certainly not as I look around this Chamber, that members of this House, or indeed the people of the Northern Territory, have attained glory, let alone that we should be urging the Almighty to advance it. Lest I stray into the realms of blasphemy by continuing in this vein, I will say, Mr Speaker, that I have been delighted that, after a couple of false starts, you returned to referring to the 'advancement of Thy glory'.

The next entry is unusual. It came from no less a person than my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, and it indicates to honourable members and guests that the committee is even-handed in its awards, being a balanced and democratic organisation. In a written question, the Leader of the Opposition clearly was referring to particularly harsh personnel practices in Treasury, particularly within NCOM, when he mentioned that the NCOM controller had recommended that an employer be terminated. I presume that it was done without prejudice.

Another quality entry occurred when, in question time, the Minister for Lands and Housing suggested that a particular quantity within his portfolio had been 'downcreased'. The Leader of the Opposition also came up with 'internicene' which, according to the Oxford Dictionary that I consulted, should have been 'internecine'. Another quality entry is submitted year after year, for which those concerned must be congratulated. The constant use of 'mischievious' by the Chief Minister and the Minister for Education is brilliant and well deserving of mention.

The member for Casuarina, as he then was, referred to the member for Ludmilla in his position as Chairman of Committees. He must have been pleading on the honourable member's behalf when he referred to 'the difficulties he has to transpose himself through'. I was sitting there waiting for the member for Casuarina to say: 'Beam me up, Scottie!' Then, we had the Minister for Tourism, in deep sociological debate about the composition of the Northern Territory population, referring to our 'vastly cosmopolitan' population'. I think he probably could also have said that it was a 'vastly unique' population. Equally the member for Karama submitted a quality entry this year when he talked about 'propagating the airlines dispute'. I am not sure that anybody would be particularly interested in propagating the airlines dispute.

We also had the Minister for Lands and Housing talking about the 'intransience' of the federal government. The member for Barkly referred to intransigence before and I am not sure that my idea of the difference between intransience and intransigence would fit in with what the Minister for Lands and Housing was trying to say. I presume that the minister is not all that keen never to see the federal Labor government pass away. However, there are

many people on our side of the House who would be quite happy to see the intransience of the federal government. Of course, it is never intransigent.

We also had a wonderful neologism in the vocab section from the member for Araluen. He was talking about particular negotiations that had reached an impasse. I am not sure whether he said 'impassez' or 'ampassez', but I do not think that either word is French. Whether such references are passe defied me.

Mr Speaker, let's get it right about this word 'legislation'. We had quality entries from the member for Wanguri and also from the Minister for Conservation. They spoke about legislation in the singular. The member for Wanguri spoke about a Clayton's legislation. The Minister for Conservation came up with something even better. Perhaps he should not be blamed for this. However, he referred to 'other legislation, some administered by other areas of government, have vital heritage aspects'. Let's pause and think about that. 'Other legislation have vital heritage aspects'. A quality entry, Mr Speaker.

We had another quality entry from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition when he referred to the people of the Northern Territory as the founding fathers of the state of the Northern Territory. The Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, when expressing his agreement with the editorial line run by the NT News in relation to Coronation Hill said, and this is a high quality entry in the vocab section: 'I wholeheartedly occur with that editorial'.

We now come to the finalists in the vocab section this year: the Minister for Conservation and the member for Araluen. It is difficult to choose between these excellent entries. I am giving them both honourable mentions because they really were quality contributions. We had from the Minister for Conservation: 'The directions are there, have been working forward for some 3 years and will continue forward as we evolve and refine its irrelevance'. When the member for Araluen was talking about the West MacDonnells National Park, he referred to the various features of interest in the West MacDonnells area. He said: 'These are interesting figures, particularly when one looks at how Ayers Rock has grown in the last 10 years'. That is not something that I have noticed.

In the syntax section, we had 2 quality entries. One was from the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government when he was denouncing members of the opposition: 'These people who are purported to be represented by the people opposite'. In this section, there was a high quality entry from yourself, Mr Speaker. As you know, Mr Speaker, I have taken a keen interest in the recently formed Select Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol. I did not realise that the terms of reference were being so narrowly defined until I heard your comment yesterday. When reminding members of meetings of committees, you said: 'The other is the use and abuse of alcohol in the conference room in the Nelson Building'. I am not sure whether I am guilty, Mr Speaker.

I am a little disappointed in the tautological section this year. We have 2 quality entries, but only 2. When the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government was talking about benefits in his work health statement, he said that it was difficult to predict into the future. That was an excellent entry. There was a degree of originality and doggedness in the entry by the Minister for Transport and Works when he said: 'Education is a great complex mixture of many, many things'.



The casual observers' section is an innovation, Mr Speaker. Let me say that it is a new innovation to the Territory Tautological Tournament. I have had this note from a disgruntled observer that 'with the second rerun of the brucellosis debate and the education debate revisited, it is enough for Rex Mossop to declare that this is deja vu all over again'.

I am not sure that this should not be a finalist in the vocab section, but it is also an entry in the casual observers' section. I believe it was an entry from the Chief Minister when he referred to 'disparrot' functions of various activities within a particular department. One casual observer told me that he was wondering whether 'disparrot' was in fact a simile for 'dat galah'.

I can say unblushingly that I have received an award from the Hansard people for the most lucid speech of the year. I think I can accept it blushingly. They passed this on to me today. I was thinking of the speeches that I had made, watching the clock run round from 45 minutes through 15. In fact, they did not mention any of the speeches that I thought had been absolutely gripping. Let me just read for you the speech that won this award for me. If honourable members will bear with me, on Wednesday 15 February, speaking in the second reading of the Racing and Betting Amendment Bill, I delivered the speech which, in the view of Hansard staff, was the most lucid of the year. My speech was as follows: 'Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the bill'.

Of somewhat greater length, I have here what is actually a late entry from 1987, but I thought it worth a mention. It is from a casual observer of the Assembly's proceedings and I do not think that it should go unrecorded. It referred to a 51-page speech from the Attorney-General back in September 1987. I do not recall the substance of that statement and I have not yet worked out what it related to but I think this reflection on it must go into Hansard:

To read a 51-minute speech, when losing voice  
Does not make listeners rejoice.  
For, without the aid of leech, the voice becomes a monotone,  
And I was not alone  
In straining at first to hear.  
But then I fear  
Had difficulty in holding off the arms of Morpheus.  
But enough, for right on cue,  
Whilst Manzie soldiered on through  
Pages numbering a ream,  
The kindly Mrs P  
Rushed to his rescue and she,  
Not making nightingale apology,  
Slipped the minister a lozenge, scarcely seen.  
Manzie thus continued in his eulogy,  
Despite an occasional bark,  
To finish at last with smiles of joy,  
Mirrored by members and public, man and boy  
But it was still well after dark.

That concludes the casual observers' section, Mr Speaker. Honourable mentions in a wonderful potpourri like that are barely able to be made.

Let us turn to another new section: the honest truth section. We had some quality entries in this section. I am surprised that I have come this

far without coming to an entry from the Leader of Government Business. You will recall that, in years past, he has been a winner. He was right up there doing his bit for the tourist industry, attracting people to the Katherine Dam last year. As I suggested, it sounded as if it might rival Lourdes as a tourist destination when we worked out the problems of orgasms in the Katherine Dam that the Leader of Government Business told us about. He made a quality entry in the honest truth section when he was answering a question on the Trade Development Zone on 23 May this year. He said: 'The real answer is in the truth'.

We had another quality entry from the member for Araluen as the acting Minister for Health and Community Services. He was answering some questions, possibly from myself, about Beatrice Hill, and he said: 'Prisoners are supplied with adequate supplies of mosquito coils to deter mosquitoes'. Even more trenchant was the Minister for Transport and Works, when he was talking about Kakadu. He said: 'You cannot get there. You cannot get there. And you have to pay \$10 when you go through the gate'. He followed that with another quality entry. He said: 'Life goes on and I will stand by that, Mr Speaker. Life goes on'. A quality entry in the honest truth section.

An honourable mention that is perhaps worthy of an award in itself came from the Leader of Government Business when he was talking about Coronation Hill. He was talking about various figures in the past and he said: 'If those blokes were alive today, they would roll in their graves'. That was followed by my colleague, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, in relation to BTEC. He said: 'Pigs are cannibalistic, and they rip each other open after they are dead'. Then, there was the member for Barkly speaking about statehood. When referring to the date at which the Northern Territory should obtain statehood, he said: 'The latest we should accept is the date of 1901 which is the anniversary of federation'.

There is another quality entry, which really is the winner in this section, but I will leave that for a moment and come back to a quality entry from the Minister for Conservation who said: 'I note with some dismay that the South Australian authorities have now copywritten the examination results'. I wonder if they were cheating, Mr Speaker! That was followed up by the member for Casuarina, yourself, Sir. I was wondering whether it was not a health and community services debate and perhaps you were making comments about sex education because it was redolent of the Karma Sutra. You said: 'All this innuendo that the deals were done, and he was the minister at the time, and Jim Robertson moved out of the way, and he moved in and he moved backwards and forwards to satisfy the honourable member for Fannie Bay, are nonsense'.

Another quality entry came from the Minister for Lands and Housing and, before I repeat this, I should say that this was said in the noise debate and not in a sex education debate. He said: 'We have offences for using their horns in an unnecessary fashion'. The Minister for Transport and Works has developed a deep understanding of the operations, not only of the Port Authority, but also of ships. That has become clear to me as I have been assessing this year's awards and this is a quality entry. He referred to the 'remote location for taking ships if they have been identified as having a leak'.

In relation to education, we had a very frank admission from the Minister for Education. He said: 'I think far too often we hear about the negative aspects of education that we are able to produce'. The member for Jingili was comparing fuel prices and the use of fuel around Australia and, in a stern

warning to members and in a quality entry in this year's awards, he said: 'In many places, people are still burning wood in wooden fires'.

However, the top award in this section goes, once again, to the Leader of Government Business. In relation to projects suggested by the opposition, he said: 'The importation of sperm from Asia, from milking cows, these are high risk projects indeed'.

Mr Speaker, I come to the final and award-winning section - the 3M award. The quality entries that did not quite make the grade were these. One came from the Minister for Education who was referring to the debate about Sanderson students who had external exams and were visiting Bali. In a quality entry in the mixed metaphor competition, he said: 'There have been students who were caught in the middle of the sandwich'. Another quality entry came from the member for Ludmilla who, in debating the merits of the Marrara Sports Stadium, said: 'I think that facility will be one of the crowning facilities in the jewel of the sports and recreation areas'. That earned him an honourable mention.

The winner, however, was a double entry in the mixed metaphor competition. I will read the entry out before I mention the name of the honourable member involved. Before doing so, I should say that, apart from a very handsome certificate, we have a trophy which has been donated by Carlton and United Breweries. I will be telexing my thanks to the managing director and, shortly, honourable members will see why. The first part of the entry was made in debate on the pastoral excisions legislation. It was as follows: 'These other subparagraphs confuse the issue. They add unnecessary red herrings racing around the place'. The other entry was: 'This bill is neither chalk nor cheese'. Mr Speaker, this year's Master of the Mixed Metaphor is none other than my colleague, the member for Stuart, the honourable Brian Ede. I now present him with his trophy.

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

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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