

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Fourth Assembly  
Third Session

**PARLIAMENTARY RECORD**

Tuesday 11 November 1986  
Wednesday 12 November 1986  
Thursday 13 November 1986

Tuesday 18 November 1986  
Wednesday 19 November 1986  
Thursday 20 November 1986

Tuesday 25 November 1986  
Wednesday 26 November 1986  
Thursday 27 November 1986

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

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

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**NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Fourth Assembly

Third Session

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Opposition Leader	Terence Edward Smith
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## PART I

### DEBATES

## DEBATES

Tuesday 11 November 1986

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

### MOTION

#### Kakadu National Park

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that:

- (1) this Assembly, being of the view that Stage 2 of Kakadu National Park does not meet stringent criteria adopted by UNESCO for the inscription of areas on the World Heritage List, unanimously:
  - (a) condemns the Commonwealth government's efforts to secure World Heritage listing of Stage 2 of Kakadu National Park;
  - (b) calls on the Commonwealth government to withdraw immediately its nomination to the World Heritage Committee; and
  - (c) calls on the Commonwealth government to adhere to the consultation provisions of the resolution of the 1984 meeting of the Commonwealth, state and territory conservation ministers on World Heritage Convention procedures.
- (2) this Assembly is further of the view that the mineral wealth of the Gimbat and Goodparla pastoral leases is a significant national asset;
- (3) this Assembly therefore strongly supports the Commonwealth government's announced intention to permit exploration and mining on the Gimbat and Goodparla pastoral leases and calls on the Commonwealth to ensure that the whole of these leases are open to exploration immediately; and
- (4) the terms of this resolution be transmitted to the Prime Minister forthwith.

Mr Speaker, it is fitting that this debate is taking place today which, after all, is Remembrance Day. This is the 11th day of the 11th month. It is the day on which Australians remember the fallen in war and we reflect upon our nationhood. It is truly symbolic that this Assembly has seen fit to debate this motion now because it is of crucial importance to our nation, its people and to the next generation of citizens of the seventh state of the federation, the Northern Territory of Australia.

The motion is more important than the mere empire-building exercises of certain Canberra bureaucrats. It is more important than the gullibility of certain ministers in another government. It is certainly of greater significance than the lame attempts of a discredited national government to win back the votes of extremist conservationists and it is more significant than the publicity-seeking habits of our Prime Minister.

What is happening, what has already happened and what is about to happen at Kakadu is of such importance that it demands a clear expression of our

concern from all the members of our parliament. By passing this motion, this parliament will make a commitment to the future of the Northern Territory and the future of Australia. If this motion should fail, we will be failing generations of Australians, past present and future, in our duty.

This motion asks some very fundamental questions about where we as a nation should be headed. We must decide, here and now today, whether in years to come Australia will be a conservationist society, one which cares for its environment but still allows a sensible exploitation of available resources, or a preservationist society, one which locks away areas saying to all its people: 'You can look but you cannot touch'. What is happening at Kakadu is not conservation but preservation: the mummification of a large slice of the Australian mainland in a museum dedicated to the misguided vote-catching endeavours of a discredited Prime Minister. While the Commonwealth is trying to lock Kakadu into an environmental freeze-frame, it is in fact doing the environmental cause no good. Parts of Kakadu are in urgent need of environmental protection, but they are not getting proper protection because of the diversion of resources into empire-building exercises rather than proper park management.

Members of the Assembly will be aware that the Prime Minister spent 2 days holidaying in Kakadu with the media last week. In the past few days, nearly all Australians will have seen film or photographs of that visit. We have been bombarded with superlatives on the attractions of Kakadu and we have all seen photos of the Prime Minister under the overhang of Obiri Rock. I am prepared to be charitable and accept that he was viewing the rock paintings, despite photos suggesting that he was asleep.

The transparency of Mr Hawke's exercise is obvious to everybody. It even became apparent to the phalanx of Canberra-based press gallery journalists who accompanied Mr Hawke on his safari into Crocodile Dundee country. It must also have been obvious to the member for Arafura who made it his business to accompany the Prime Minister on various boat trips, barbecues and other official engagements during those 2 days in Kakadu. Mr Hawke visited all the tourist spots in Kakadu, the escarpment country, Aboriginal art sites, the wetlands and Yellow Waters. But, he hardly explored the vast savannah woodlands of stage 2 and he did not even visit Senator Gareth Evans' buffalo country, the Gimbat and Goodparla pastoral leases which the ANPWS wants to include in Kakadu.

While the Prime Minister and the member for Arafura were gaily tripping along the South and East Alligator Rivers, it is a fact that time was ticking away for the Northern Territory. After a very slow start, the Commonwealth has finally decided that Kakadu is of such ecological importance that it must be wrapped up in cotton wool for all time. It has sharply accelerated the pace of wrapping up this bundle of Northern Territory land.

Parts of the area were first proposed as a national park by the NT Reserves Board in 1965. It was not until the Fox Inquiry that the Commonwealth took the proposal seriously. Kakadu stage 1 was declared a national park in April 1979. It was World Heritage listed in 1981 and that listing had the support of the Northern Territory government. This area of the park has been managed by the Canberra-based Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service since 1973. From this bridgehead, the ANPWS has set about expanding its hold in the Northern Territory. It is regrettable that the Fraser government succumbed to the Canberra bureaucracy by allowing this empire building to continue, excluding the embryonic ANPWS empire in Kakadu from the control of the Northern Territory government when it was granted

self-government in 1978. This allowed the ANPWS, under a new Labor government in 1984, to spread its tentacles into stage 2 of the park. By the way, the decision to declare stage 2 a national park was made without reference to the Northern Territory government. Now the ANPWS is gung-ho for World Heritage listing of the second stage, and it already has its avaricious sights set on the Gimbat and Goodparla pastoral properties for eventual inclusion in the park and, most likely, eventual World Heritage listing as well.

All along the Kakadu road, the Commonwealth has spoken to the people of the Northern Territory with a forked tongue. I do not have the time to detail all of the sins of the federal government in this area, so I shall just use one example. It is one which, I can assure the Assembly, is fairly typical of our treatment by the Commonwealth. On 16 September this year, the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment, Mr Cohen, promised the Northern Territory that we would be consulted before any attempt was made to seek listing of stage 2. This is what he wrote to my Deputy Chief Minister:

Should the Commonwealth decide to pursue World Heritage listing of the former stage 2 area, your government will be consulted in accordance with the Council of Nature Conservation Ministers (CONCOM) agreement prior to any approach being made to the World Heritage Secretariat in Paris.

Mr Speaker, 24 hours later that promise was broken when the Commonwealth sent its submission to UNESCO for listing of stage 2. Just 24 hours: that is how long a promise of a minister of this discredited federal Labor government lasts, and the breaking of that promise was revealed only when some officers from Mr Cohen's own department were questioned by a Senate committee some days after the event.

It is a fact that World Heritage listing of stage 2 is being sought without proper consultation with the Northern Territory and it is being done despite the concerns of the Northern Territory. This motion calls on the Commonwealth to withdraw the World Heritage listing because of the lack of consultation with the Northern Territory. The Commonwealth's attempt to obtain listing, without the agreement of the Northern Territory, flies completely in the face of a statement made by Mr Cohen during a speech to the 1985 Australian Environmental Law Symposium that 'if we are to ensure genuine protection of these unique areas, then we can and must do it with the cooperation of the state governments'. Also, it clearly breaks the agreement made between the federal government and the governments of all the states and the Northern Territory at the meeting of the Council of Nature Conservation Ministers in July 1984. I will quote from the Commonwealth's own document entitled 'Australia and the World Heritage Convention' which was prepared by the Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment as recently as February this year. The document says that the agreement is that:

the Commonwealth government write to the state and territory governments inviting them to submit suggestions, with supporting information, for places to be examined with a view to possible future nomination to the World Heritage List;

the Commonwealth government to arrange for the appropriate authorities to examine the places against the stringent criteria for World Heritage listing;

any consideration by the Commonwealth government of the issues to involve full consultation with the state and territory governments; and



any suggestions for World Heritage listing brought forward by other than a state or territory government to be referred, with supporting information, to the relevant state or territory government for comment prior to an examination by the Commonwealth.

None of those procedures has been followed in the matter being brought before the World Heritage Committee in Paris later this month. This document, from which I have been quoting, has more to say about consultation:

The Commonwealth government has indicated that it will not take unilateral action to nominate areas for World Heritage listing without the agreement of the state or territory concerned. In the government's view, such action, if it occurred, would be likely to lead to confrontation with states or territories which may well do more harm than good in the long run. The Commonwealth government is committed to the preservation of Australia's natural and cultural heritage and considers that this aim can best be achieved through cooperation and consultation rather than conflict and confrontation.

This unilateral action is being taken. Where is the cooperation and consultation? Mr Speaker, I am afraid that it is the same story: lip service by the Commonwealth to consultation, but no results. The federal government must withdraw its stage 2 application if it is to retain any credibility at all with the Northern Territory people.

As I have said, the Northern Territory government supported the World Heritage listing of stage 1. There are features of world importance in that part of the park, including 20 000 years or so of cultural heritage which are displayed in the Aboriginal art sites there. Also, we agree that some areas of Kakadu stage 2 may be considered worthy of listing, but I hasten to add that the vast majority of stage 2 is not in that category. Perhaps as much as 80% of stage 2 is unable to meet the strict criteria set down by the World Heritage Committee, and that is why the ANPWS and the federal government are trying to sneak the listing in through the back door by nominating it as an extension to the existing stage 1. They know that it will not stand up to a separate nomination. Once again, the interests of the Territory are being sacrificed on the altar of Canberra's political expediency.

Mr Speaker, we have evidence that massive environmental damage has been caused in parts of stage 2 by buffalo, pigs, feral horses and even weed infestation. We know that the World Heritage Committee guards jealously the prestige attached to its listings and that it will be concerned that the currency not be devalued by the inclusion of substandard areas on its register. To quote the federal minister, Mr Cohen, at a news conference on 12 September 1984, the World Heritage List must remain an exclusive list of the world's natural and cultural treasures. Indeed, the list is so exclusive that only 216 places in the entire world had been listed by December last year. They include the pyramids of Egypt, the Grand Canyon in the United States, the Taj Mahal of India, Chartres Cathedral in France, and Sagarmatha National Park which contains Mount Everest.

Stage 1 of Kakadu National Park may rank with these wonders of the world, but the savannah grasslands, buffalo-damaged bogs and scrub of stage 2 do not. To obtain listing an area must be outstanding. It must be exceptional and unique. The committee wants only the Rolls Royces of the world environment and cultural heritage. 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. Buffalo and feral pigs have trampled the

freshwater wetlands to such an extent that salt water has flooded into them and is rapidly destroying the natural environment. Stage 2 is becoming an environmental disaster area populated by buffalo, wild horses and feral pigs.

Faced with the Commonwealth government's cavalier attitude to the World Heritage listing of Kakadu, we have no choice but to seek to put our own case to the committee in Paris. If the federal government proceeds with its nomination, we will use all the means at our disposal to attempt to delay the committee's consideration until it can be proven that this area is of the superlative environmental and cultural standards required.

I put the Northern Territory's arguments to the Prime Minister at a meeting in Canberra last month. He and I have exchanged several telex messages in recent weeks about the Territory government's concerns but, so far, there has not been a sufficiently positive response from Canberra. My latest telex to the Prime Minister re-emphasised our determination in this regard. Mr Hawke has offered to have the Australian delegation put our case to the committee, but that is not good enough. How can we expect the delegation which is carrying the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service's brief to the committee to give due weight and regard to the Northern Territory's position? How many of these people will truly know the Northern Territory's argument, and how many of them will care?

Currently, we are seeking from the Commonwealth an invitation for Northern Territory representatives to join the Australian delegation as properly accredited members. Already, our government has commissioned a video supporting its argument on stage 2 and we will seek to put that before the committee in Paris this month. In addition, a Northern Territory delegation will be sent to Paris to lobby members of the World Heritage Committee on our behalf. The government has engaged a former Attorney-General, Tom Hughes QC, as our chief advocate, and we are hopeful that he will be allowed to appear before the World Heritage Committee in session to put our case directly.

The Deputy Chief Minister will be in Europe also at that time and he will join the Northern Territory delegation in Paris. Unfortunately, none of these measures is enough to guarantee that the committee will delay its consideration pending a proper examination of the merits of the stage 2 nomination. That is why this motion now before the Assembly is so important. If carried, it will express to the federal government and the World Heritage Committee the united voice of the members of this Assembly. It is a clarion call that surely cannot be ignored.

Mr Speaker, in the time remaining, I wish to support the Commonwealth on one recent initiative broadly connected with the Kakadu issue. In the face of economic reality and some hard lobbying by the Northern Territory government, the Commonwealth has at least agreed to allow exploration access to the Gimbat and Goodparla pastoral leases on the boundaries of the park. This will enable work to proceed on the Coronation Hill gold, platinum and palladium deposit by a joint venture involving BHP, Noranda Pacific Pty Ltd and EZ Industries. In a press statement on 16 September, the federal government announced that Cabinet had agreed that 'the economic potential of this project is such that provision should be made for the exclusion from any national park extension of an appropriate mining lease area, and the project allowed to proceed subject to normal environmental, Aboriginal heritage and related clearances'. On the face of it, this is welcome news for the Territory because it presents an opportunity for new mineral development, more jobs, and benefits to the whole Territory community if the project should proceed. However, the Northern Territory government is concerned that this is no guarantee that any area of

these leases other than the Coronation Hill deposit will be opened up to mining should the exploration reveal worthwhile deposits of minerals.

The Kakadu region is one of the most richly mineralised zones in the world and there is every likelihood that significant mineral deposits other than Coronation Hill will be located on the Gimbat and Goodparla leases. Given the Commonwealth's blemished record in such matters, we are naturally cautious about any promises the Commonwealth makes about access to exploration and mining.

The final part of the motion aims to give some strength to the jelly-kneed members of the Labor Party who may feel inclined to back down on another act of faith with the Northern Territory on the Kakadu region.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate what I said at the beginning about the duty which faces members of this Assembly. Today we all have to make a personal choice about our duty to stand up for the interests of the Territory. Are we true Territorians who have the backbone to put the interests of the Northern Territory first? The vote on this motion will reveal who is for the Territory and who is against it. I hope we can be unanimous. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting all words after 'that' and inserting in their stead:

all consideration by this Assembly of matters relating to the listing of stage 2 of Kakadu National Park on the World Heritage List be postponed until:

(1) the Minister for Conservation tables in the Assembly:

(a) the UNESCO documents detailing the stringent criteria for World Heritage listing;

(b) a detailed brief relating to the presence or otherwise of these criteria in stage 2 of the park; and

(c) the submission, together with attached documents, including videos, which it is intended to present to UNESCO in opposition to the listing of stage 2 of the park on the World Heritage List; and

2) all members of this Assembly have undertaken detailed inspections of stage 2 of the park.

Mr Speaker, this amendment has been drawn up hastily because of the complete lack of notice given to the opposition that such a substantive debate would be conducted today. It exemplifies the reason why this current government should never get its hands on Kakadu National Park. I think that the Northern Territory government should control Kakadu National Park, and eventually will, but it will never do so while this kind of debate is brought on. The total pig ignorance of this government cannot be better demonstrated than by what it is trying to do in this Assembly this morning and I refer all honourable members to ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Arafura will withdraw the remarks relating to the government.

Mr B. COLLINS: I beg your pardon?

Mr SPEAKER: If my hearing is correct, the member for Arafura used the words 'pig ignorance'. I ask him to withdraw those remarks.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw those remarks.

The total, collective, absolute and categorical ignorance of the government is exemplified in the major basis of the motion before us, and I ask all honourable members to consider it. The basis of this motion is contained in the first paragraph: that all members of this Assembly state that 'stage 2 of Kakadu National Park does not meet the stringent criteria adopted by UNESCO for the inscription of areas on the World Heritage List'. When I saw the motion this morning, I did a quick run around the members of the opposition. I would have obtained exactly the same result if I had run around to all members in this Assembly, particularly the Minister for Conservation and the Chief Minister, and asked them simply to list for me, and to demonstrate their familiarity with, the criteria for World Heritage listing. Apart from the scripts with which, no doubt, some ministers have been provided, I have no doubt that, until this morning, none of them would have been familiar with any of the criteria.

What the government is asking this Assembly to do relates to a matter on which there is universal agreement in this country. It is a matter of great national significance, whether members want to agree with it or otherwise. I refer to the inscription of stage 2 of Kakadu on the World Heritage List. I have no doubt that all members of this Assembly have never examined the criteria for World Heritage listing and have never examined the details of whether stage 2 of Kakadu National Park meets those criteria or not. The government expects us to make a totally ignorant and ill-informed decision in the Assembly this morning on this matter of world importance. There could not be a better example of this government's complete unfitness to manage the park.

Mr Speaker, as all members of this Assembly are committed to the oath that we swear when we come in here - to uphold the good government of the Northern Territory - there should be at least a pretence of allowing honourable members of this Assembly time to examine the evidence on which the government wants us to throw out unilaterally this application for listing on the World Heritage List allegedly on the failure of stage 2 to meet the criteria. It is a fact, and everyone inside and outside of this Assembly knows it, that there would be scarcely a member of the Legislative Assembly who would be even basically familiar with those criteria or would have any detailed personal knowledge of whether the park matches up to those criteria.

I have had a very long involvement with Kakadu National Park. Without the slightest doubt, over the last 18 years, I have traversed every inch of it. For 2 years, I was employed in Kakadu National Park, researching buffalo on behalf of the Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry as it then was. Subsequently, I spent 3 years in the national park working for CSIRO researching buffalo specifically and also compiling information on the flora of the region. Subsequently, I had the great privilege and joy of having Kakadu National Park contained within my electorate for the last 10 years. Both as a politician and as a researcher, my involvement in Kakadu National Park has been extensive. The reason I make those points is that, only rarely, have I spotted any member of this Assembly in Kakadu National Park carrying out a detailed inspection. I am reliably informed that the relevant and responsible minister has never been to Kakadu National Park in an official capacity as minister.

There is no argument that this Assembly is being asked, on the basis of pure ignorance, to make this vital decision regarding the World Heritage value of Kakadu National Park. What a disgraceful performance on the part of this government! On this very rare occasion, we are meeting for 3 weeks. At the very least, one would have expected that the government would have given notice of this motion so that all honourable members could have made themselves familiar with the criteria for World Heritage listing which is contained in the first paragraph of this motion and have taken the opportunity to study the very complex matter of whether Kakadu stage 2 complies with those criteria.

Can I say categorically that, in my view, stage 2 of Kakadu National Park, in its entirety, satisfies not 1 but each of the 8 criteria attached to the cultural significance of the park and the criteria relating to the natural significance of the park. It satisfies every 1 of them and I will demonstrate that in just a minute. I have to demonstrate it because the Chief Minister, who moved this motion ...

Members interjecting.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, could I ask for at least some protection by the Chair?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! At least 2 honourable members have been running fairly constant, across-the-floor chatter. I ask all members to cease their interjections.

Mr B. COLLINS: The Chief Minister failed to provide us with anything; he did not address the criteria, not even the 2 broad categories, in his speech this morning. One would have expected that, as the mover of the motion, he had some obligation to address himself to the motion. However, he failed to do so. Apart from his totally ridiculous and categorical statement that 80% of stage 2 does not comply with those criteria, he did not address himself to them.

Mr Speaker, I guess we are meant to rely completely on the political statements of the Northern Territory's development consultant, Mr Harry Butler. I dare say that Uranium Dundee, Harry Butler, will do precisely the same job for the piper that's playing his tune on this occasion. I would suggest to the Chief Minister that he have a look at Mr Butler's record because he has no credibility at all. The glaring headlines of the NT News yesterday described the listing as a fraud. Harry Butler is the fraud, Mr Speaker. Not only is he a fraud now; he has been for some considerable time. Here is a man who, apart from 1 fleeting claim to fame through ABC television, has a totally discredited record in respect of environmental matters in this country. Indeed, some of Mr Butler's clients over the last few years are worth listing. He has worked for Anaconda, Hamersley, Mount Newman, Texas Gulf, Amex, Woodside Petroleum and so on.

He made some marvellous statements in support of the Franklin Dam saying, in fact, that the Franklin Dam would flood nothing but 'waste country'. He was employed by the Tasmanian government but discredited himself quickly in the first days following his appointment by making absurd statements about the Franklin that were incorrect factually. He was hounded out of the place after a few short weeks and resigned his commission. Indeed, yesterday, Mr Butler misrepresented himself once again, as he has done so often on these issues, and denied that he had ever advocated the building of the Franklin Dam. At the time, Mr Butler was quoted in the Tasmanian Mercury as saying

that there was no environmental evidence at present indicating that the dam should not proceed. That is just one example but there are many more. If the Chief Minister would like to extend my time this morning, I will list them.

Mr Butler has become, and is known as, the voice for the developmental lobby, not the environmental lobby, of this country. He has no credibility, Mr Speaker. He is very fond of working for governments and he works on the principle that most other people do ...

Mr Dale: Shame!

Mr Coulter: He works for Australia.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister for Community Development and the Deputy Chief Minister to refrain from interjecting.

Mr B. COLLINS: ... that he who pays the piper picks the tune. Indeed, the statement that was re-run this morning about the Rolls Royce being a clapped-out Holden was not an environmental statement. As I was going to say this morning, it was a political statement and, if I needed any confirmation of that, I obtained it when the Chief Minister trotted out his secondhand comments. That is not the statement of a consultant whom one would employ to give serious consideration to whether there should be a World Heritage listing. It is a political statement. It is a slogan, directed straight at the press gallery and trotted out again this morning, for the second time, by the Chief Minister.

Mr Speaker, I will comment briefly on the attitude of some of the honourable ministers opposite to the great significance of Kakadu, and particularly on a matter which the member for Barkly said was the secret of selling it when he opened the Kakadu tourism centre in Jabiru some time ago. I was present at the time. He referred to the absolutely priceless Aboriginal heritage as the key to selling both our major national parks internationally, and we all know it. Mr Speaker, I will tell you what the Deputy Chief Minister had to say about that priceless heritage, so valued at least by the visitors who come to see us. I am quoting from Hansard of Thursday 23 August 1986:

I was talking about the Territory, and I said that Mt Brockman was a sacred site. He looked at me and asked what a sacred site was. I explained about the Rainbow Serpent at the bottom of Mt Brockman. He was amazed and interested, but it is very difficult when you are trying to do business with international companies and overseas representatives when you are talking about rainbow serpents living at the bottom of rocks.

Mr Speaker, that is precisely what I am talking about. When ministers of the government are prepared actively - and I can imagine the way in which this conversation was delivered - to denigrate the very aspects of the park that we all know, and the former Chief Minister realised, are the very key to making a commercial success of the park, we really have got off to a very bad start. This particular government of the Northern Territory demonstrates through its senior spokesmen, again and again, why it is not fit to control the park.

For the benefit of members, I will canvass briefly the matters that are pertinent to the major thrust of the government's motion: the criteria for World Heritage listing that I think all honourable members, before they vote on this, should reasonably inform themselves of.

There are 2 broad listings, those under cultural property and those under natural property. I will run through the cultural criteria: that the area represents a unique artistic or aesthetic achievement; has exerted considerable influence, over a span of time, on the development of the area; is extremely rare or of great antiquity; be among the most characteristic examples of a type of structure involved; be a characteristic example of traditional styles evolved for human settlement; be most importantly associated with ideas or beliefs, with events or with persons of outstanding importance or significance. Those are the very matters which the Deputy Chief Minister was happy to denigrate when he was representing us overseas. In every case, consideration will 'be given to the state of preservation of the property and that the features should be authentic'.

In terms of natural property, 'outstanding examples representing the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history and outstanding examples representing significant ongoing geological processes, biological evolution and man's interaction with his natural environment'. Where better could you see that than at Kakadu? 'Contain certain unique, rare or superlative natural phenomena, formations or features of exceptional natural beauty' and 'the habitats where populations of rare or endangered species of plants and animals still survive'. Those are the criteria of which, I have no doubt, the majority of members of this Assembly were happily ignorant until 10 seconds ago. Before they reject out of hand the nomination of stage 2 for World Heritage listing, members should at least make a pretence or a show of being informed about what they are about to vote on.

It is a fact that stage 2 of Kakadu National Park fulfils every one of the cultural and natural criteria laid down for World Heritage listing. From my own work in Kakadu National Park, I know that 1 of the endangered and rare species contained in Kakadu National Park is that magnificent symbol of the Territory, the magpie goose. We all know that, once upon a time, the goose was found throughout this entire continent and in Tasmania also. It was found in every state. We take it for granted. We look at a magpie goose and literally do not see the outstanding beauty that visitors from overseas see in that bird. The bird exists here because the sedgelands and wetlands have been preserved in Kakadu National Park whereas they have been destroyed everywhere else in this country. The population of this magnificent and endangered bird is confined largely to the Northern Territory of Australia and, predominantly, to the wetlands of Kakadu National Park. The hooded parrot is another endangered species which lives in stage 2 of Kakadu National Park. That is yet another example of how Kakadu fulfils the criteria impeccably.

Turning to cultural significance and the criterion of man's interaction with his environment, where else in the world could such an outstanding example of the interaction between the original Australians and their environment be put forward for public viewing, as is now being done through some of the superb restoration and protective work of the ANPWS in the park? Not only do we have a documented 40 000-year history of the occupation of that area, largely preserved intact, but the descendants of the people who created that priceless inheritance still live in the park. This is a unique matter indeed and has been commented on by many of the visitors who realise the outstanding value of Kakadu National Park.

The extension of the park is an attempt to preserve a river system in its entirety. That seems to have escaped the attention of members opposite as well, even though this is the first time it has been attempted in a very long time.

Professor Mellanby is with us once again. He was with us, I remember, a few years ago. He is certainly better qualified than is Harry Butler to speak on environmental issues. He is a proponent of a scheme which is highly relevant to his own country, Great Britain: the regional park proposal. We have been through the complete irrelevance of such an approach to Australia. Professor Mellanby's idea of a national park is to have a nature strip down the middle of Bagot Road, where there are little patches of green grass with birds nailed to trees and lizards hiding under rocks: the Harry Butler type of Walt Disney national park which is totally irrelevant to Australia and particularly so to the Northern Territory. Because of our 200 scant years of European settlement, we have an opportunity unique among developed countries to preserve some of our most magnificent heritage intact.

Harry Butler has supported the mining of bauxite in the jarrah forests of Western Australia, the construction of the Franklin Dam, and everything else his employers have paid him to support. If people like him could have had their way during the last 200 years, this would be an academic debate indeed, because there would be no national park left to preserve.

I want to address myself to an ignorant catchcry of some of our federal colleagues as well as members here. This is the so-called 'clapped out buffalo country' which comprises the majority of stage 3, in fact, rather than stage 2. I too have a little story about buffalo.

The very reason why the area needs protection, as the CSIRO will confirm, is that this so-called 'clapped out' country, the woodland, is the most important resource in terms of acting as a generator for Kakadu. The woodland contains the majority of both the plant and animal species that exist in the park. Indeed, those large expanses of country which the government members would have us write off as irrelevant, the sedgeland and wetlands, act as the absolutely essential dry season refuge for the magnificent colonies of water birds which are enjoyed by the 130 000 visitors who come to Kakadu National Park every year, and that number is increasing rapidly. It is ignorance of the most profound kind simply to say that we can create a national park, as the Deputy Chief Minister wants to do, and put in 20 mining companies. He says that he has them in a queue waiting to move into all stages of the park, a measure in which his own federal colleagues clearly will not support him. It is the Professor Mellanby approach to parks: put little fences around the sacred sites, put a little fence around Jim Jim and have mines everywhere else. It would rapidly become a travesty of a national park if we tried to do something like that.

We have an opportunity in the Northern Territory to do something that people elsewhere do not have. Forgetting about the environment for a minute, we are using it as the foundation stone for our most rapidly-growing industry, tourism. Tourism will be the cornerstone of the Northern Territory's development in the foreseeable future. The government is trying to degrade the very resource that we will use as a basis for that development. Indeed, I refer again to the former Chief Minister who said that there is no question that Kakadu and Uluru will be the basis of the future health of our tourist industry.

Mr Speaker, it is obvious that members opposite rarely talk to the tourists - and they could have come out on the trip just recently - who are still coming to Cooina and the South Alligator River in large numbers because of the improved works that the ANPWS has undertaken in Kakadu in order to make wet season areas accessible now. Nature trails, public toilets and other facilities have been established there. A public boat ramp is being



constructed on the South Alligator River at the moment at a cost of \$600 000. It is to be hoped that we never again hear the 100 barbecues line run in the Legislative Assembly in view of the fact that we are about to spend another \$4.5m of federal government money this year on capital works alone out of a total budget of \$8m.

In stage 2 of Kakadu National Park, there are areas of great international significance that need to be preserved. As I said, there are 2 species of birds that exist in Kakadu stage 2 and nowhere else in this country because their habitats have been destroyed elsewhere. That is precisely what the Northern Territory government is proposing to do with stage 2. That area contains the wetlands associated with the Magela system. Those wetlands are seasonally or permanently inundated with water, creating Kakadu's major natural asset: the magnificent water bird population. It contains the sedgelands, the so-called clapped-out country, that are essential for the preservation of those species through the dry season so that they can be there to be enjoyed in the Wet.

Once again, let us talk about buffalo. One of the specific tasks I had when I worked in Kakadu was to create buffalo-free areas in Kakadu National Park to test the rapidity with which the park recovered when buffalo had been excluded. Can I tell members opposite that that recovery is nothing short of remarkable. Within 2 or 3 years of eradicating buffalo, those lands come back. Within 2 or 3 years, entire populations of the magnificent red lilies that attract so much tourist admiration in the park come back. Indeed, Yellow Waters is a classic example in that, 5 years ago, there was not a red lily there because they had been totally destroyed by the buffalo population. Four years ago, 13 red lilies were counted in Yellow Waters after buffalo eradication started. A scant 4 years later, those red lily populations had returned almost intact to their former beauty.

In reference to the World Heritage criteria, it is essential that those areas be listed because those areas have been damaged by people who are almost as ignorant as some people here. Currently, the ANPWS is spending in excess of \$500 000 a year and has a permanent team of 8 people eradicating mimosa alone. It is essential that the park be returned to its natural beauty. It can be returned to its natural beauty in those areas that are still capable of recovery.

I must say that the new ambassador to UNESCO has done something that most of the members of the government have not bothered to do. In the last few weeks, he has actually inspected stage 2 of Kakadu National Park. No doubt, the Australian ambassador to UNESCO will be better informed than members in this government who should have the primary responsibility for protecting the park. Indeed, the Minister for Conservation has never been there officially to inspect the park. The Deputy Chief Minister is quite happy to stand up on his hind legs and say that he has 20 mining companies ready to mine all 3 stages of it. This government should be condemned out of its own mouth. Not even its federal colleagues are prepared to go as far as the ministers of the Northern Territory government are prepared to go in destroying this unique asset of the Northern Territory, Kakadu. The World Heritage criteria include, as an important criterion, the protection of those areas that have been damaged and degraded, where such protection is still possible.

We have 3 weeks of sittings before us. It is obvious from the contribution of the Chief Minister, which we can reasonably expect is the substantive statement given that he is the mover of the motion, that the government will not make reference to any of the criteria for World Heritage

listing. He has given no information in support of his motion, apart from the political slogan run by Harry Butler yesterday on behalf of the government which is paying him. We have had no evidence put before us that would justify support for this motion.

My motion simply seeks to allow all members - and perhaps it could be done during the course of this sittings and debate deferred until the final week - to acquaint themselves with the very detailed criteria relating to World Heritage listing. I am happy to provide copies. They can acquaint themselves also with a detailed brief, which no doubt can be provided by the Northern Territory Conservation Commission, of where those assets exist or do not exist in Kakadu National Park. It would allow us all to have a look at the submission which allegedly is going to Paris with the Deputy Chief Minister. It would allow us to see the Harry Butler video taken in Kakadu National Park which allegedly will be used as the basis for opposing this nomination. That will allow us all to do credit to this Assembly and the Northern Territory, which we are pledged to serve, by voting in an informed rather than an ignorant manner.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, we have just heard nothing new from the member for Arafura; he has said all those things many times before.

He said that Mr Hawke was at Ranger 68. In fact, there was television evidence to suggest that he was not at Ranger 68 when he made the statement. Some 5 or 6 weeks ago, on 24 September, Senator Durack wanted to go to Ranger 68. He wrote to Professor Ovington to ask if it was all right to go there and the professor's reply of the same date was that the ANPWS was not aware of the location of Ranger 68. Professor Ovington must have really schooled himself up since then. He had seen Crocodile Dundee, had a closer look and, 6 weeks later, he knew where Ranger 68 was. The tour guide, Crocodile Bob, the member for Arafura, knows where it is. At that time, Professor Ovington did not. He is the man who ridicules his former boss Mellanby for the criteria he used in respect of national parks in England where Ovington served his apprenticeship. He ridicules the man who taught him all he knows today, the man who has come to Australia. He says that he nailed birds to trees and mowed nature strips. The man who says these things, Professor Ovington, is responsible for Kakadu stage 3 which occupies 20 000 km<sup>2</sup> of the Northern Territory.

If all 20 mining companies were to go ahead, as I have suggested, they would occupy 1% of the park. I have been quoted in the national papers as saying that the total area occupied by the Ranger mine is 4 km<sup>2</sup>. It produces enough fuel to generate 30 000 megawatts of electricity, which is 1.5 times Australia's annual requirements.

The national papers have seen the Hawke exercise for what it is. Hawke is a skin-deep greenie. Members have only to read any recent newspaper to realise that he is not convincing anybody. It is political gimmickry that simply will not work. I can lay my hands on many newspaper cuttings in which Mr Hawke is quoted as saying that the government will allow mining in Kakadu. Only a few weeks ago, in September, he was saying to his officers and staff that he would keep his options open in relation to mining in Kakadu. His wooing of the greenies will backfire because intelligent Australians will see it for what it is. One editorial, which I do not have with me at the moment, put it quite clearly. It said that the Prime Minister will not fool thousands of intelligent Australians. Many of them - and it hurts me to say it - are members of the Labor Party, and they will see this exercise for what it is. Of course, the member for Arafura says that there should be no mining in stage 2, nor in Gimbat or Goodparla in stage 3.

Mr B. Collins: I did not say that.

Mr COULTER: He did not say it. But let us listen to what was said at the 1986 Labor Party Convention in relation to the party platform: 'Support the inclusion of Gimbat and Goodparla pastoral leases in Kakadu National Park without provision for mining and exploration'. He did not say it, but that is what his party platform says. I would be interested to hear from the honourable member for Arafura, as a Senate candidate, what his position is on stage 3. I will read this into Hansard because all Territorians should know what this alternative government is prepared to do to the Northern Territory. Listen to this:

The government recognises the extreme importance of Coronation Hill and the Big Sunday sites complex, and the traditional affiliation of Aboriginal people to the Gimbat Goodparla area by ensuring that the area is made available for claim by traditional Aboriginal owners. In implementing its policy on the incorporation of Gimbat and Goodparla, the government will oppose mining in those areas and seek, by any practical means, to disallow all existing mining leases.

That is what the alternative government of the Northern Territory is prepared to do; that is its policy. That is what came out of its conference. We must remember that this is the Northern Territory Branch of that Australian Labor Party. Its Prime Minister is on record as saying that 35% of stage 3 should be available for mining. There are many examples of such statements by the Prime Minister.

I shall be interested to hear from the opposition's next speaker. Hopefully, it will be the opposition spokesman on no-mining for the Labor Party in the Northern Territory who will get to his feet and explain to Territorians what the Australian Labor Party's position is. Honourable members, do not worry too much about the criteria for World Heritage listing. I am sure you all have copies and have all read them. I will quote from them also, in a moment, because the member for Arafura is very good at selective quotation. But I suggest honourable members obtain the ALP's constitution, its party platform and its conference details for 1986 and read those.

To turn back to the World Heritage listing, I am sure the member for Koolpinyah, myself and, indeed, all the residents of Palmerston and its environs will be very pleased by the first criterion for listing - which the honourable member did not read out. It says that an area shall 'represent a unique artistic achievement, a masterpiece of the creative genius'. Honourable member for Koolpinyah, that is a description of your block because it is the same type of ...

Mr B. Collins: That is a cultural criterion, you fool.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will resume his seat. The member for Arafura will withdraw that remark.

Mr B. Collins: Mr Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw my remark that the honourable minister is a fool.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Arafura will withdraw that remark without debate.

Mr B. Collins: Mr Speaker, I did so unreservedly and I do so again.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I consider it a compliment to be called a fool by the honourable member for Arafura, even as I did when I was called mischievous by the honourable member for Stuart.

Mr Ede: You agreed with that too.

Mr COULTER: I agree wholeheartedly. You can rubbish me as much as you like. I collect about 200 votes every time you bad mouth me. Mr Speaker, let us go ...

Mr Ede: You mean you have 40% now?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will cease interjecting.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, let us go back a few years and see how far to the left we have come on this conservation issue, where the people stood who originally started out to promote the development of a national park, and how far removed from that are the statements made today by the Environment Centre which advocate no mining in stages 1, 2 and 3 and World Heritage listing for stages 1, 2 and 3.

I have with me a document from the Darwin Conservation Society. In February 1971, it wrote to Mr Hunt, who was then the Minister for the Interior at Parliament House, Canberra, in relation to the developments at Kakadu. The submission was sent by the society's president at that time, Mr W.P. Walsh. It is important to understand why the Reserves Board nominated this area for dedication as a national park. The simple fact is that it was the only large area of vacant Crown land available, and only vacant Crown land could be turned into a national park. The region was available and suitable for use as a national park. It should be remembered that Mr Bowen, then the head of national parks in New South Wales, dedicated something like 3900 km<sup>2</sup> as a national park. In this document, there is no suggestion that the flora and fauna preservation requirements of the Top End had been examined, and no suggestion that the park proposal covered an area especially needing preservation. This is the document.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind honourable members that today is Remembrance Day. I invite honourable members to stand in silence for 2 minutes in remembrance of those who have fallen in the defence of this country.

Members stood in silence.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, in regard to the Nabarlek and Ranger uranium province of the day - because the mines were not there at that stage - the Darwin Conservation Society said:

We see the Nabarlek Ranger uranium province as a critical power source for the planet during the next 2 centuries. There can be no doubt that it will be made to yield up its energy. It seems that the government is seeking a compromise that will permit a national park and mining at the same time. The Reserves Board, on the other hand, are holding out for a national park alone and will not even discuss the compromise.

Nothing changes, does it? This was 15 years ago.

We consider the position of the Reserves Board to be untenable. The deposits must be mined but, at the same time, we also want the park

to be established. It would seem that we are in a basic agreement with the government. If our compromise proposal is adopted, a very valuable precedent will have been set. Common sense will have prevailed and, in recognition of this, we suggest that the park be called the Uranium Province National Park.

How far we have moved to the left in recent times from the position taken by people before us who sought to advocate the development of Australia. How far we have sunk. Australia is 39th on the international credit list, between Cyprus and Barbados. That is where the world's greatest Treasurer has taken this country at the moment and it is going backwards at the rate of \$1400m a month. With a debt now at \$100 000m, we are fast achieving the status of a banana republic. Within the next 12 months, all we will be able to do is pay the interest bill on that debt. That is where the Labor Party has us now and that is where the Northern Territory Branch of the ALP will ensure that we remain: as a third world country. I look forward to hearing the contributions from the opposition spokesman on mines and energy. I want him to tell the miners of Australia what the alternative government in the Northern Territory would do for them. I do not hold much hope for them, but I could stand to be corrected.

Let me give the shadow minister for mines and energy a few figures on the wealth of mining and what it does for Australia. It employs over 200 000 people directly and supports another 300 000, which is 7% of Australia's work force. Last year, it paid \$1200m in taxes and royalties and it spent \$1800m on capital equipment in 1984-85. It produces 50% of Australia's export dollars. That is what the mining industry does for this country, which is now rated 39th on the international credit list, a country that is between Cyprus and Barbados. Despite this, the federal government will deny access to our huge mineral deposits. Assay samples came back from Coronation Hill just recently. In one 2 m core sample, there were 64 g of gold. At least 11 t of gold and perhaps 30 t of gold are locked up at Coronation Hill. Platinum and palladium are also available.

I am not sure whether the Senate candidate opposite wants to mine in stage 3 or not. I know what his party platform tells him and, of course, I know what his Prime Minister says. His Prime Minister says that the ALP will mine. I will be interested to hear just what he will do if he gets to the Senate. Of course, he has to be careful, and he had to impress his new boss the other day. He needs the vote of the left and it is the left that Mr Hawke is trying to appease at the moment. I would have liked to have been there with the member for Arafura the other day. He has told us about Professor Ovington and how good he is at managing the park and the cultural heritage there. He did not tell members that Big Bill had to wash off a painting that he did the other day because Professor Ovington did not like it. He did not mention that the cultural history that was being put on stone out there had to be removed under order from the ANPWS hierarchy and Professor Ovington, the man who served his apprenticeship under Professor Mellanby whom the member for Arafura rubbished. Professor Mellanby was also Derrick Ovington's professor.

What went wrong when that man transmigrated with the magpie geese and the whistling ducks into Kakadu? What went wrong was that he saw an opportunity to empire build. That has not stopped. Remember that it is ALP party platform policy to include stage 3 in Kakadu and that that runs into Eva Valley. Do we remember Eva Valley, the freehold land that was bought by an Aboriginal group and immediately turned into Aboriginal land under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act? Remember what Eva Valley

runs into? You have it: Katherine Gorge. If you believe that the ALP will stop and not include Katherine Gorge in Kakadu stage 15, or whatever stage it is up to by that time, think again. I put it to members that that is the game plan.

Mr Speaker, I returned recently from Canberra and therefore I can tell you that that theory is alive and well in Canberra as well. In Canberra, I saw them drawing lines on a map of stage 3 and saying that mining would be permitted here and not permitted there. People 3000 km away are deciding the future of Northern Territorians by drawing lines on maps. Have a look at the lines drawn on the Kakadu stage 2 area. Do they follow any river system, any ecological strategy or any mountain range? No, they follow the straight lines of the old pastoral lease. The federal government has not been imaginative. Its officers have not been out there and tried to come to grips with the fact that it has become too big for them.

The mineral prospectivity of the area is well known, but we would like to know more about it. The member for Arafura spoke about all members going out there. He forgot that most members have served time on the South Alligator River assessment committee on the environment and have indeed travelled out there on many occasions. The honourable member would remember Mr Milton who recently flew over Coronation Hill. I understand from reliable sources that Mr Hawke flew over it too during his recent trip. Unfortunately, he went to sleep and there are many people who were on board that flight who can provide that information. They flew in a helicopter over the 250 km<sup>2</sup> of the land claim at Coronation Hill. They said to the traditional owners: 'That must be that Bula site down there'. They all looked and said: 'Is it?' They were flying at 1000 ft at the time. Remember you can only fly at 1400 ft over Kakadu because, according to Derrick Ovington, it blows the seeds off the thistles and creates many problems. Accordingly, when they spotted it from the air, the Bula site was some 50 m away but that did not worry them. It should not worry the member of Stuart too much - the man who delivers letters full of cyanide around Alice Springs, giving a new meaning to the expression 'poison pen'. It should not worry him too much to know that you can fly over an area and assess it. Of course, that is what they did with the Milton inquiry recently.

What we are trying to protect is the World Heritage List itself. We have legal opinion that the area does not stack up on even 1 of the criteria read out by the member for Arafura. There is a need for mining, to get Australia out of the economic plight that this Labor government, whose representatives are assembled here today, has brought about. It has a party policy in the Territory that will put us further behind. Our alternative government has a policy which would not allow mining in stage 3, including the Gimbat Goodparla area in the park, and which would give it back to the traditional owners.

The choice that Territorians have is that they can go for a CLP government that is unashamedly pro-development. That is not a dirty word. Development is not an obscenity. It might be to the Prime Minister, but he would not recognise development if he fell over it. We have to get on with development before somebody else owns this country. We have celebrated Remembrance Day here this morning. It is also the date on which they hanged Ned Kelly and sacked Gough Whitlam. Let us hope that today we can get this motion to the Prime Minister, to given him a message from the Northern Territory

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I have listened to the Deputy Chief Minister. I urge honourable members to accept the amendments moved by the member for Arafura. I do not think the Deputy Chief Minister even touched on the motion moved by the Chief Minister.

I will concentrate on some of the issues that relate specifically to the people within the East Alligator River region. I remember when the Fox Inquiry was established to look at the Alligator Rivers region and to seek the views of the local people about the mining of uranium. I remember people who were alive then who have since died because of the pressure they were subjected to from day 1, when uranium mines were actually established and exploration was allowed to occur.

I am very much aware that there are people there who are concerned about the financial rewards of mining in the area. I am aware also that they are environmentally conscious because, if we allow all mines to go ahead within the area, they will have nothing for their children or their children's children to live for and believe in. The area was only given back to those people within the last 10 years. They were successful in claiming both stage 1 and stage 2 of Kakadu National Park and 1 of the main arguments that the land council put forward to the then Fraser government was that the park would act as a buffer and protect the interests of Aboriginal people in the area. I believe the park is doing that very well. I commend the ANPWS for doing the job that it has been asked to do. It is employing Aboriginal people to participate in park management and to show the world and especially people in the Northern Territory the cultural aspects of the park.

I do not agree with the Chief Minister's motion. Like the member for Arafura, I represent some of the views of the people who live in the area. The Deputy Chief Minister says that Bill Neidjie and people in the Jabiluka Pancontinental area have expressed the view that mining should go ahead. I am very conscious of the environment. I have toured the area with the Sessional Committee on the Environment. I used to get out there very often during my days with the land council. Time and time again, I have heard those people express the values that the area holds for their people. From our perspective, that is culturally important. When we look at areas like Uluru, we see the same values being emphasised by the people who live there.

If stage 2 or 3 of the proposed national park, including Gimbat and Goodparla, are opened to mining, what future is there for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, especially the people who claim traditional rights in the area? Quite honestly, it would be an embarrassment for the Northern Territory, especially this government which wants to get out there and mine as much as it can. The Deputy Chief Minister says he has 20 mining companies ready to go in there.

Taking into account what the federal government has done, going right back to the Fraser government which took the cultural values of the park into account, it would be a sorry day if the park were totally opened for mining. I repeat what the member for Arafura said. The area is beautiful in its own right as a park and as a breeding ground for waterfowl. Also, it is an area of cultural importance to my people. I commend the amendment moved by the member for Arafura.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, it seems to me that a fallacy has been put forward and elaborated on this morning, particularly by the member for Arafura: that the only way we can protect Kakadu stage 2 is to put it on the World Heritage List. That would mean that it would be closed to all uses except as a national park for tourists to visit. I suspect that it would not be too long before the greenies of this country would be saying: 'The numbers of tourists will have to be limited because they could act like buffalo and destroy the park'. The area would be locked up tight for all time.

We have come a long way since Rum Jungle. Mining was carried out there without any care for the environment. Heavy metals, including copper and lead - not uranium as many people would believe - were allowed to pollute the Finniss River. The area has been cleaned up recently at some considerable expense to the Australian taxpayer. Those days are long since gone and thank heavens for that. We do not want mining of that nature to occur in this country ever again.

There have been quantum leaps in mining. We have 2 examples. Right in the heart of Kakadu stage 1, in the wetlands area of the park, are Ranger and Nabarlek. They are actually on excised areas, but that is merely a legal matter. It was put to me only last night that, with the Office of the Supervising Scientist out there, there are about 80 scientists trying to find fault with uranium mining, and finding virtually none. We have our own Department of Mines and Energy which sets even tougher standards than the OSS, as can be demonstrated by reading the minutes of various meetings. Our Territory Department of Mines and Energy has treated the miners in a very tough manner on some occasions. I remember when some of the tailings emerged from the water. The water was supposed to be a metre deep over the tailings and the Department of Mines and Energy closed the mine down for a time. A tremendous amount of experience has been gained at Ranger and Nabarlek concerning the handling of uranium mining in an environmentally safe manner. A great deal of understanding has been gained by people, very cautiously and very carefully. I support that, and so does every member of the Sessional Committee on the Environment of which I happen to be the chairman. If these mines can operate successfully right in the heart of the very important stage 1, taking great care of the environment, there is no reason why mining cannot take place in Kakadu stage 2 with the same safeguards.

The Chief Minister's motion suggested, quite correctly, that stage 2 does not come anywhere near to meeting the UNESCO requirements for World Heritage listing. It is not unique by any means. It is the same type of savannah land which can be found throughout Australia. It is intrinsically some of the most boring country to look at with its sparse trees and tall grass. That type of country comprises most of Kakadu stage 2. To put it on the World Heritage List does not make any sense. I believe it would be a tremendous embarrassment to the Australian people, and I would like to save the federal government from this embarrassment. How would it be for important world visitors who come out to see this World Heritage Kakadu stage 2 when they go through that type of country? I can just imagine the scathing reports they would make in the newspapers, and rightly so. It just does not meet the criteria.

I am aware that, even though a piece of land may not be visually attractive to visitors, it may still be biologically important because of the plant and animal habitats which it contains. I was concerned about this point, but I have been assured by people who know that there is nothing unique as a habitat for plants and animals about the savannah lands of Kakadu stage 2.

We have demonstrated in the Territory that mining can take place in a very sensitive area such as the wetlands where Ranger and Nabarlek are located. It jolly well should be able to take place in Kakadu stage 2 which does not warrant inclusion on the World Heritage List. The only reason it has been put forward by the federal government is as an attempt to pander to the greenies. The federal government has lost support in the electorate. It is going down the gurgler and is trying to get back in with the left wing of the ALP. It is prepared to sacrifice Australia's heritage and mineral wealth.



I support the Chief Minister's motion that the federal government should withdraw its nomination. I would not be so worried if the Commonwealth government had done what the world conservation meeting in 1980 suggested in its resolution on multiple use and methods for listing land on the World Heritage List. It suggested that governments consult with the provincial government and the owners of the land to try to obtain their agreement. Unfortunately, our friends in Canberra have ignored that recommendation. The world conservation resolution is that disagreements should be put to the UNESCO group. I am not so worried if the federal government does not withdraw the nomination, provided that it abides by the rules. I believe that the UNESCO people should inspect the area. I understand that, on occasions, they have not bothered to look at an area and that is what the member for Arafura has said about us. Of course, many of us have flown over the area and also have inspected it on the ground. If the UNESCO people inspected the area, I have no doubt that they would say that the vast majority of Kakadu stage 2 did not meet the criteria which have been set down for World Heritage listing.

The second part of the Chief Minister's motion relates to the Gimbat and Goodparla pastoral leases. Obviously, these are very significant national assets and they deserve the support of all Australians. I deplore the misinformation campaign that resulted from the Prime Minister's visit to Kakadu in the last few days. There were photographs of all those significant Aboriginal sites that must be taken into account in the multiple use of the park area, but there were few photographs of the savannah country. The photographs were of the escarpment areas and other areas that we have always said must be protected. The Gimbat and Goodparla leases do not meet those criteria by a long shot. The people of Australia need to be given a clear picture of the nature of Kakadu stages 1 and 2 and the proposed stage 3. It is very easy to pull the wool over the eyes of millions of Australians by not giving them the full story.

Again, it is refreshing to see that the federal government has indicated that it will allow exploration and then mining, no doubt taking into account the Aboriginal people's wishes and concerns, which is only just and right, in the Gimbat and Goodparla leases. But, it has not said that it will allow it over the whole area. We need the wealth that the Territory can generate for all of Australia and this area would help provide that. However, there are those in the federal government who, to appease the greens, the left wing of the Labor Party, the support base which is running away from them, are prepared to lock this away forever and a day. I must confess that I was heartened by one of the federal ministers - I think it might have been Mr Cohen, but I will not swear to that - who was reported as saying that another government could renege on the World Heritage listing. I do not believe stage 2 of Kakadu will have World Heritage listing if the process is carried out fairly. Secondly, if it is not carried out fairly, there would be no moral obligation on a Howard-led coalition government to obey those particular rules. I hope that Australia will be saved from the embarrassment of trying to list this vastly boring savannah country on the World Heritage List because we will be the laughing stock of the world if we do.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, if ever there was a justification for the amendment proposed by the member for Arafura, it is in the very words of the member for Sadadeen, the Chairman of the Sessional Committee on the Environment of this Assembly. He has been on that committee for years and years. He said twice in this debate that his membership of the committee had put him in a very good position to know a great deal about these matters in so far as they related to the ecology of the area, and the excellent way that Nabarlek has looked after the national park. He stated twice ...

Mr D.W. Collins: I say it again.

Mr EDE: Thank you. I will take that interjection on board because that is the third time. For the information of the Chairman of the Sessional Committee on the Environment, Nabarlek is 40 km from its closest border to Kakadu National Park. He does not even know where the park is.

Mr Coulter: And neither do you.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Stuart will be heard in silence.

Mr EDE: The member for Sadadeen used that as his justification for his supreme knowledge. He has proven beyond any doubt the need for all members to support the amendment proposed by the member for Arafura which states that all words after 'that' be omitted and there be inserted in their stead that all consideration by this Assembly of matters relating to the listing of stage 2 of Kakadu National Park on the World Heritage List be postponed until the Minister for Conservation tables in the Assembly: the UNESCO documents detailing the stringent criteria; a detailed brief relating to the presence or otherwise of these criteria in stage 2 of the park; and the submission, together with attached documents, including videos, which it is intended to present to UNESCO in opposition to the listing of stage 2 of the park on the World Heritage List.

Mr Speaker, obviously that is what is required at this stage. The honourable chairman there stated that he had had experience which was not even obtained in the park. If we want more evidence, let us refer to the speech of the Minister for Mines and Energy because he also said that we were experts because we were members of this committee. In fact, I think he was a member for a shorter time than I was, and that is something of a record. He stated that we were experts because of the trips we had made and a visit to the Ranger mine, and that that had shown us what Kakadu was all about. Once again, the very person who, we are told, is to go to Paris to explain to UNESCO why this area cannot have world listing, does not know. As yet he has not realised that the Ranger mine and the area surrounding it have been excised from the park. We were not in the park.

Mr Speaker, once again, he has shown that he does not know where the park boundaries are. To date, 2 of the 3 government speakers have shown by their own words that they do not know where the boundaries of the park are, yet they are telling us that we have to make a decision on this matter.

Mr Coulter: He does not even know where Ranger 68 is.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will take that on board too, because that was a totally incorrect interpretation by the NT News.

Mr Coulter: It is a telex from him. Did he get his telex wrong, too?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, his earlier statement, that the Prime Minister was in the wrong area, was totally incorrect. He was within the boundaries of Ranger 68.

That demonstrates why the amendment must be accepted. The honourable minister who, we are told, is to go to Paris to put the case of the Northern

Territory government, does not know where the boundaries of the park are. The other speaker does not know where the boundaries of the park are. If that is the level of knowledge that the government has on this proposal for Kakadu National Park, obviously it is time that its members took a few steps back and had another look at the whole proposal because they will make absolute and total fools of themselves if they continue in the way they have gone today.

Deliberately, I have waited until this stage to speak because I wish to ask where in this whole debate is the honourable Minister for Conservation? Talk about silent Sam! This debate has been under way for months. I have yet to hear that the minister has put out a press release or that he has visited the park. Either he is extremely embarrassed or he is still working up his proposal for a flying fox industry that we heard about some time back. I hope it is the former rather than the latter but, no doubt, we shall find out when he leaps to his feet and tells us how he is defending conservation principles in the Northern Territory. I have been waiting for some time to hear of the minister's visit to the Kakadu Park. To the best of my knowledge, he also has not been to the park or, at least, not since he became the Minister for Conservation. However, I hope that he is able somehow to show himself as slightly more knowledgeable on these issues than the speakers we have heard so far.

The Chief Minister referred to Remembrance Day and said that his motion was what Australia was all about. Is that really the case, Mr Speaker? This government has lifted the reservations from mining of the whole park, not just over stage 3. It lifted the reservations from mining of stage 1 and stage 2 as well. It lifted the reservations from the escarpment, Obiri, Nourlangie and the Magela wetlands. The Minister for Mines and Energy went, like the Pied Piper, down Macquarie Street whistling up companies to come and lodge ELAs over areas in the park. Is that what Australia is about? That is what this government is about. I do not believe that that is what Australia is about, nor do I believe that that is what Territorians are about.

The Minister for Mines and Energy said he could have 20 companies lined up in a week. Mr Speaker, you can imagine it: all the bulldozers, engines running, lined up to charge like the great Oklahoma land grab. I believe that the vast majority of Territorians, those who love the land and who are not up here simply to rip the place apart, are justly very proud of Kakadu. They are proud of its antiquity, its beauty, its cultural richness, its uniqueness, its wealth of flora and fauna, and the rare and endangered species that are in the park. At every opportunity, this government has done nothing but denigrate the beauty, uniqueness and wonder of Kakadu. As the honourable member for Arafura said, it is no wonder that their federal counterparts happily are not quite so ready to talk about tearing the place to pieces, but is it any wonder that this government is referred to in many quarters as a bunch of clowns and cowboys?

I have to concede that parts of Kakadu would never have become clapped-out buffalo country if the Northern Territory government had been in control. It is obvious why. I would like to relate a joke that is doing the rounds in Darwin at the moment. It is not a bad one. The question goes: 'Why would there be no buffalo damage in Kakadu if it were controlled by the Northern Territory government?' The answer is, of course: 'Because they would have lost all the buffalo'. There is no chance of Annaburroo becoming clapped-out buffalo country.

The government is made up of a very strange group of people. They subsidise the profits of tourist operators in Darwin and they ensure they will

have to pay out bigger subsidies by killing the goose before it has even had the chance to lay the golden egg. They knock Kakadu at every opportunity. They denigrate it as a 'clapped-out Holden'. I hope that the Minister for Tourism will take some part in this debate, because he will be able to explain to us why this government subsidises tourist industry profits on the one hand and on the other hand rubbishes the very areas that will ensure that those subsidies can be reduced.

I would like to refer to a scenario that was put to me the other day by a person in the tourist industry. He was referring to the amount of discussion currently taking place about mining in Kakadu. I was trying to explain to him that I thought it would not happen and that he should not really worry about it. He said: 'Hang on. Take the example of a retired couple in San Francisco who have decided that at the end of their working life they are able to make an overseas trip. They are deciding where to take this trip. It will probably be the only one they will be able to afford. They have seen Crocodile Dundee and they are very impressed by what they saw, but they have also been shown a lot of information on places in Europe. They then start to hear stories of mining in Kakadu and how the government of the Northern Territory is objecting to its inclusion on the World Heritage List'. As the person said to me, the information may be incomplete but there will be a clear message to the potential tourists and the result will be that they will opt to go to Europe. That is what we will have to wear in future years, if the government continues at every opportunity to denigrate and knock the wonderful heritage we have at Kakadu.

The Minister for Mines and Energy says that only 1% of the area will be affected if every one of the mining operations goes ahead. That is palpable rubbish. Take the case of Ranger 68, for example, about 20 km from Ranger. The proposal to mine it includes a levy bank around the mining area with a conveyor belt to carry the ore to Ranger. Let us think for a moment about what that entails: a conveyor belt 20 km long with a levy bank on both sides. That levy will be going through some of the most vulnerable wetland areas between Ranger 68 and the Ranger mine. The Minister for Mines and Energy wishes us to believe that the only areas that will be affected are those areas which are actually covered by the mining leases and things like conveyor belts and 20 km levy banks across wetlands are simply engineering matters which will not affect the land. That is rubbish.

I would like to conclude by saying something about this expert which the government has suddenly come across: Mr Butler. Mr Butler is known in a number of different areas. He is known from the time, some 20 years ago, when he was a member of a combined services expedition to Western Australia. He travelled around central Australia and, in April 1967, he was met by a ranger in the vicinity of the Kintore Ranges. It was discovered then that Mr Butler had in his possession a slab that had been taken off the roof of a cave in that area. When the piece of stone was examined, it was concluded that it could only have been removed from the roof of the cave by using a stone chisel. He was heading back to Western Australia with it. Do you know how long it took the authorities to get back that valuable Aboriginal artifact? This great environmentalist is nothing better than a pillager. It took 2 years to get that artifact back. That is the person that this government is relying on as the great saviour and conservator. He is the great pillager.

Mr Coulter: You are the shadow minister for mines and you have not even spoken about mining yet.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, if you will give me an extension of time, I will continue to talk.

I ask the minister to give us an assurance, before he goes on this trip with his great entourage, that he actually will be able to get into the meeting to present his case. He has been making great play about what he is doing, but it all seems to be play to his New Right colleagues.

Mr McCARTHY (Conservation): Mr Speaker, we have heard some very emotive and ill-informed outpourings from the opposition here today. The object of this motion is to transmit a clear message to Canberra that World Heritage listing of Kakadu stage 2 is not on as far as the Territory is concerned. Even that small, boisterous group over there that goes by the name of Her Majesty's opposition must acknowledge that the Prime Minister's sudden turnabout on Kakadu is totally transparent.

Mr Smith: Is that your speech?

Mr McCARTHY: Absolutely my speech.

Mr Smith: It is not what he has in front of him.

Mr McCARTHY: You have done well.

Are they willing to allow themselves to be dragged into the embarrassing charade that saw its first act played out in Kakadu last week or are they going to stand up and show some intestinal fortitude against their Canberra masters on this most critical issue? I suspect that, once again, they will refuse to take up the challenge and, by so doing, will reconfirm that they are opposed not only to the interests of Territorians but of all Australians.

It is an appropriate day for all members in this Assembly, particularly those on the opposition benches, to remember a phrase that helped bring a federal government to power in 1972. The government of which I speak is, of course, the Whitlam government and the words to which I refer are: 'It's time'. That phrase symbolises the 1972 federal election. Members of the Labor Party would do well to dwell on that phrase when considering how they will vote on the motion before them today because, honourable members, it is time. It is time for all Territorians, including the opposition, to stand up and be counted.

If they are unwilling to stand up and be counted, they will be damned in the eyes of the people of the Northern Territory. The choice confronting them is a fundamental one: are they for the Territory and Australia and therefore opposed to the listing of Kakadu National Park stage 2 with the World Heritage body or are they for a minority group of self-indulgent, self-important, moralistic rowdies, living in a world of fantasy in the suburbs of the southern cities? Those are the people who support such a listing. The choice is simple. Those of us who are capable of clear thinking know that Kakadu National Park stage 2 and the Gimbat and Goodparla pastoral leases can accommodate multiple land use. Those of us not affected by the sight of our Prime Minister, his Napoleonic visage scanning the grandeur of a small portion of Kakadu National Park for the benefit of a gaggle of southern media representatives, realise the giant area that is Kakadu can successfully accommodate conservation, tourism and mining.

Federal Mines and Energy Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, has said so of late in speeches and in letters. His case for multiple use of all national

parks, including Kakadu, was nowhere better put than in an address to the Senate Estimates Committee in September this year. Allow me to quote from Hansard of that day, less than 2 months ago:

Subject to appropriate protection, there ought to be no intrinsic, rational reason why a multiple land use regime should not be established for national parks which already accommodate a variety of different land uses anyway, such as tourism and so on, and in some cases agriculture. Therefore, there ought to be in principle no objection to a wider-ranging multiple land use regime.

Mr Speaker, what has occurred in the 7 weeks since that statement was made by the good senator to send Mr Hawke scurrying north to Kakadu to tell Australians that Kakadu stage 2 should be placed on the World Heritage List, without further delay, in a bid to protect its virtue? People like the Prime Minister would have all Australians believe that the beauty of Kakadu is unspoiled, pristine. What rot! What has happened during those 7 weeks is that the man once known as Mr 78% has realised that people do not believe in him any more. The popularity of Australia's political messiah has dropped in recent weeks at a faster rate than has the Australian dollar. In a bid to inflate the value of his electoral image and his standing, he will be forced to try to buy back the greenie vote.

Bob Hawke is not fair dinkum because he knows, as do the members opposite, I am sure, and as Senator Evans clearly realises, that Kakadu should not be locked away and left untouched for all time. Tourism, mining and conservation can coexist in Kakadu provided the proper precautions are observed. The area we are talking about is huge. Kakadu stages 1 and 2, along with the Gimbat and Goodparla leases, cover about 20 000 km<sup>2</sup>, about a third of the area of Tasmania and, as has been said before, the size of Israel.

The Territory government has demonstrated clearly that it is in favour of conservation. We argued to have stage 1 of this national treasure placed on the World Heritage List. We realise there are areas in stage 2 that should not be touched because they are far too special, far too delicate. That is what multiple use is all about: leaving undisturbed the special areas while carefully using other areas within park boundaries. Kakadu National Park is not 13 000 km<sup>2</sup> of unique, virgin country, as some would have us believe. Both stage 2 of Kakadu and the 6700 km<sup>2</sup> that make up Gimbat and Goodparla, which protectionists would have locked away also, have a huge percentage of what Mr Justice Fox described, during his Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry, as land 'somewhat monotonous scenically'. Justice Fox went on to add: 'Most parts are undulating and there are low hills and ridges'. It is inspiring, isn't it? Great stuff. Those of us who have taken time to visit the park would probably have an even less charitable description than that.

For the benefit of the member for Arafura, I have visited Kakadu National Park many times over the years, though not as minister because it has been taken out of my control. It belongs to the federal government and is in the control of the federal minister. The policy of that government, and I have copies here, is that Kakadu should remain with the federal government forever. As I have no doubt the member for Arafura is aware, some weeks ago, I spoke to Dan Gillespie and made arrangements with him to visit Kakadu National Park in December. The honourable member went out with Dan Gillespie last week and Dan said: 'McCarthy is coming out here in a couple of weeks'. He said: 'Get on to the media and make a big thing so that, when he goes out, it looks like I made him do it'. That is how shallow the man is.

Mr B. Collins: That is a lie.

Mr Palmer: It sounds like you, Bob. It sounds like you, son.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Arafura will withdraw that interjection.

Mr B. Collins: Mr Speaker, I withdraw it.

Mr McCARTHY: As I said, Kakadu is not in my area of responsibility and neither is Uluru. Until recently, we in the Territory government felt unwelcome in those places, but we are mending those bridges and I will be going out to see more of Kakadu. For the information of members opposite, I have been over Kakadu just recently. The most fitting description for a good percentage of Kakadu National Park is 'scrub'. That description may shock those Friends of the Earth who, in spite of having never been to the park, insist it must be locked away for all time. Escarpment and wetlands make up less than 35% of Kakadu. The Gimbat and Goodparla pastoral leases, which offer nothing more significant in the way of features worth protecting than Kakadu, have less than 10% of escarpment country.

It is the sort of country that would rate as a devalued listing in the eyes of the World Heritage body, and it has been suggested that attempts to get a second-rate area inscribed on the World Heritage List would affect future attempts by Australia to have other areas listed. The member for Arafura talks about the criteria for World Heritage listing. There are 4 of them.

Mr B. Collins: You have boned up in the last 2 hours, have you?

Mr McCARTHY: There are 4 criteria for World Heritage listing and I was aware of them before. They have been in this speech for days. Natural properties nominated must:

(i) be outstanding examples representing the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history; or (ii) be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing geological processes, biological evolution and man's interaction with his natural environment as distinct from the periods of the earth's development - this focuses upon ongoing processes in the development of communities of plants and animals, land forms and marine and fresh water bodies - or (iii) contain superlative natural phenomena, formations or features or areas of exceptional natural beauty, such as superlative examples of the most important ecosystems, natural features, spectacles presented by great concentrations of animals, sweeping vistas covered by natural vegetation and exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements; or (iv) contain the most important and significant natural habitats where threatened species of animals or plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation still survive.

It might interest honourable members to know that the federal government has made its application on the basis of all 4 of those criteria, not just one.

Mr B. Collins: There are 12.

Mr McCARTHY: If it has found a few others, so be it.

Another great myth perpetrated by the protectionist cult to which Mr Hawke seems to have developed a new-found affinity in recent weeks is that the Territory government wants to mine the escarpment country and the unique wetlands of Kakadu or, in the words of Professor Ovington, 'Swiss-cheese Kakadu with mines'. He said the same thing about Uluru. To make such suggestions is arrant nonsense. The lowland areas within Kakadu, which typify most of the scrub around the Top End, contain key prospective areas. I am not referring to the wetlands, but the rough country that can be found throughout the Top End.

Speaking of wetlands and geese, everybody knows, as does the member for Arafura, that mining did not wipe out the magpie goose in southern Australia. It was wiped out by indiscriminate shooters.

Mr B. Collins: Mining? Who said that?

Mr McCARTHY: You implied it.

Mr B. Collins: It was agriculture. Their habitat was destroyed.

Mr McCARTHY: These are the areas which contain huge mineral deposits, estimated to be worth somewhere in the vicinity of \$35 000m to \$100 000m. Mr Hawke could certainly buy back a few valuable percentage points if that sort of money were used to reduce our crippling foreign debt. If the federal government locks away for eternity minerals as valuable as this, it rates as not only the most cynical but undoubtedly the most expensive piece of pork barrelling of all time.

In January of last year, the Commonwealth-state-territory working group outlined a policy for mining in national parks. The report issued to the Australian Minerals and Energy Council made several worthwhile points. It said that mining could proceed in some instances in national parks but:

- (1) decisions on competing land usage should be taken only after weighing the social benefits and costs;
- (2) an environmental impact statement and detailed mineral survey should be conducted to identify the minimum boundaries needed and adequate representation of all features requiring protection;
- (3) plans of management should provide for exploration and mining with special controls to ensure the conservation value of the area is not diminished and both mining and environmental activities should be controlled by legislation; and
- (4) in park areas, there should be allowances for rights of access for those holding tenements in the conservation area before its proclamation and there should also be provision for general rights of access to those parks recognised as having high mineral potential and provision for a mechanism allowing the areas not considered prospective at the time of proclamation to be explored should they be recognised as having mineral potential later on.

What we have here is a balanced approach to the question of multiple land use and not a lopsided deal favouring a particular sectional interest group. The CLP government realises only too well the value of Kakadu on both heritage



and economic grounds. Unfortunately for the mining companies, we are not concerned that this necessarily means adopting techniques which will be most expensive. I have long contended that, and I have said this before in this Assembly, if a mining operation cannot be economically viable under the most stringent of environmental restrictions, it should not be allowed to operate. Today's techniques allow a mining operation to be confined to a limited area and the mine site to be rehabilitated when mining is completed. Ranger and Nabarlek, for instance, represent only 0.02% and 0.013% respectively of Kakadu and the Gimbat and Goodparla leases combined.

The rate with which Mr Hawke is attempting to push for World Heritage listing of Kakadu gives off an odour of the most offensive kind of political expediency. In dealing with this ancient and timeless land, why must a government, a group of mere mortals, whose individual lives on the face of this earth are nothing when compared with the age of land itself, take it upon themselves to rush into a decision to gain cheap political points and the hope of another term in office? Wasn't it Mr Hawke who promised to lead Australia out of the jungle of political confrontation into a brave new world of consensus and consultation? There has been no consultation on the issue of World Heritage listing for stage 2 of Kakadu. I have been asked why I have not been out to Kakadu. The federal government does not even talk to us about Kakadu; it did not come to us and ask about Kakadu. I am the Minister for Conservation yet it did not come and talk to me about it.

Mr Ede: You don't know where Kakadu is.

Mr McCARTHY: They probably talked to you.

There has been absolutely no consultation on this issue of World Heritage listing for stage 2 of Kakadu. The decision was a unilateral one that was reached thousands of kilometres from Kakadu. In a letter to the Territory Chamber of Mines on 29 August of this year, Gareth Evans said: 'It would be premature to pursue the World Heritage listing of Kakadu stage 2 until related questions about mineral activity in the Kakadu region have been addressed by the Commonwealth. Additionally, I consider that the issue of whether or not to seek a listing should be settled with the benefit of consultations with the NT government'.

There has been no consultation with the Territory government and that is why I call on members of this Assembly to support this motion. There must be consultations under the provisions of the 1984 meeting of Commonwealth State and Territory Conservation Ministers on World Heritage procedures. Members opposite will no doubt remember only too well what happened to the last Labor government which decided to rule without the benefit of consultation. The country was rent asunder and, 11 years ago to this day, that same government came undone. I urge members to support the Territory, to support Australia and to support this motion and put the opposition amendment where it belongs.

The member for Arafura said earlier that the magpie geese population was suffering at the hands of miners.

Mr B. Collins: That is not what I said.

Mr McCARTHY: I would like to assure him and all honourable members that our magpie geese population is doing very well. It is surviving well on Tortilla rice. The Conservation Commission has undertaken studies to protect the breeding grounds of magpie geese. They are in no danger at all of being wiped out in the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, you will never see a magpie

goose in the scrub areas. They are on the wetlands, but we are not talking about the wetlands. The wetlands will be protected.

Mr Speaker, as I have said, there is little chance at all that the amendment of the member for Arafura to the motion of the Chief Minister will be passed. He seeks from us the ability to table the UNESCO documents, the video that was taken for the UNESCO meeting in Paris and the submission, together with attached documents including videos, which it is intended to present to UNESCO. There is no way in the world that we will table those here. They are a part of our strategy for saving Kakadu from the wiles of those people who would tie up that area of land forever. There is no way in the world that 20 000 km<sup>2</sup> of scrub can be managed adequately without this sort of use.

Mr B. Collins: 20 000 km<sup>2</sup> is a bit rough.

Mr McCARTHY: All right, let us say 15 000 km<sup>2</sup> and 5000 km<sup>2</sup> of valuable heritage. At the most, 5000 km<sup>2</sup> is valuable heritage and the rest is scrub. We cannot get away from that. If the opposition members think they can fool people by sitting here and saying that, I think they have another think coming, because Territory people know Kakadu. They go to Kakadu, as I have, and they know what is there. They know how little of it is good country and how much is rubbish country.

Mr Speaker, there is no doubt at all that, if justice is done, the UNESCO body will throw out the move by the federal government to include stage 2 in the World Heritage listing. It is being snuck in through the back door because there is no other way it could get it there.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, we have just had another brilliant demonstration of the contempt that this government has for the processes of democracy in the Northern Territory. In the very last few words of the pretty dismal performance of the Minister for Conservation, he made it clear that he will not tell this Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory what is in the so-called strategy that this government will undertake in Paris. The government stands condemned for that attitude which, of course, it is not unlike its attitude to a railway line and other important issues in the Northern Territory. It is quite content to tell everybody outside the Territory everything about these issues but to keep the people inside the Territory in the dark.

As I understand it, a few weeks ago the Chief Minister played Rugby Union in the Masters Games and, ever since, he seems to have had an attack of the rah-rahs. Last week, I had the pleasure, I suppose, of accompanying the Chief Minister up the Track talking about statehood. Certainly, what he delivered to the people there was very much a rah-rah address on the advantages of statehood. He did not talk about some of the more cautionary elements of the statehood story and the need to ensure that we tie everything down. Particularly, he was attempting to convince the people of Alice Springs, Hermannsburg, Tennant Creek and Katherine that they should accept his word that there were no financial implications in relation to statehood. It is quite clear that people were not convinced by that argument and, in the statehood debate, that is one of the key issues that needs to be tied down.

The same approach has been adopted with this. We have a rah-rah motion which, in its very first paragraph, says the Kakadu National Park does not meet the stringent criteria adopted by UNESCO for the inscription of areas on the World Heritage List. What happened is that the 3 members opposite - the

Chief Minister being the only exception - who have spoken in this debate have shown an appalling grasp of what the topic is about and have not even shown a familiarity with some of the basic concepts of Kakadu National Park. I will go through them again because it is very important.

The Chairman of the Sessional Committee on the Environment proudly demonstrated his ignorance on 2 or 3 separate occasions and said that Nabarlek was inside Kakadu National Park. We all know that Nabarlek is 40 km outside the national park and that, in fact, it is in Arnhem Land.

The Minister for Mines and Energy - the Northern Territory's answer to the Dodgy brothers - said that he did not know where the park boundaries were either. He was exceptionally confused about the park boundaries. I would suggest quite seriously to the Northern Territory government that, if it is going to Paris with a serious intent, it should leave the Minister for Mines and Energy behind because, if he puts on a performance over there like he put on in this Assembly today, he will do the Northern Territory case more damage than good. Rarely have I seen such a disgraceful performance.

Then, we had the Minister for Conservation writing his speech over the lunch break and still getting it wrong. He said that Ranger and Nabarlek represent only 0.02% and 0.013% respectively of Kakadu and the Gimbat and Goodparla leases. We know that Nabarlek is nowhere near Kakadu. It is 40 km away unless, by an administrative sleight of hand yet to be announced in the Government Gazette, it has been shifted in the way that the Northern Territory government attempted to shift Ayers Rock in debate 2 or 3 years ago. We have heard 3 speakers from that side of the Assembly who were unable to get the basic facts right.

The worst example was the Minister for Conservation who, by the very nature of his portfolio, ought to have an interest in and a concern for conservation of the Northern Territory. He does not even know what the criteria are for World Heritage listing. He said that there were 4. In fact, there are 12 criteria. There are 4 under the heading of 'natural property', which he outlined, and another 8 under the heading of 'cultural property' which he forgot or did not know about.

Mr B. Collins: He denied that they existed.

Mr SMITH: As the member for Arafura says, he denied that they existed. By doing so, he wiped out 40 000 years of Aboriginal culture as being of no significance and of no importance in this debate. 40 000 years of Aboriginal culture just went by the board as the result of the ignorance of the man who has the official administrative responsibility in the Northern Territory government for conservation measures, for parks and for the place of people who live and whose history lies in those park areas. That is of no concern to the Minister for Conservation, but I bet it is of enormous embarrassment to his Chief Minister and I bet it is of enormous embarrassment to his department and the Tourist Commission. If one took the Minister for Conservation literally, the Tourist Commission would have to rewrite its publicity and take out any recognition of Aborigines in Kakadu.

Mr Speaker, the 3 speakers on the government side are the best advertisement that we could have for the amendment proposed by the member for Arafura. It is clear that the honourable members do not know the UNESCO requirements for World Heritage listing. It is clear that the government has not made an objective assessment of whether the Kakadu area does fit within the 12 criteria for World Heritage listing. The Commonwealth government is

saying that, not only does the Kakadu National Park stage 2 meet some of those criteria, it meets all of those criteria. In terms of World Heritage areas, that is most unusual. It is most unusual to find any proposed park fitting all 12 criteria.

In this debate, it is incumbent upon the government to disprove that Kakadu stage 2 meets either all or any of those 12 criteria. It has provided no evidence whatsoever that that is the case. It has given itself the vehicle to do so through the motion yet it has provided the members of this Legislative Assembly, who have a responsibility for good government in the Northern Territory, with no evidence at all to back up its assertion in the first paragraph that stage 2 of Kakadu National Park does not meet the stringent criteria adopted by UNESCO. Thanks to the member for Arafura, we know what those stringent criteria are - at least, we are 1 step ahead. We have heard no evidence from the other side that demonstrates that Kakadu stage 2 does not meet those stringent criteria.

Our amendment provides members with the opportunity to think about it and to come back with some evidence to show to the people of the Northern Territory. We would be in a position then to have an informed debate on the matter. No one shies away from the fact that this is a very important matter. We would be able to have an informed debate on it rather than this very blatant and obvious attempt to score political points. Of course, it appears that the government members opposite are not interested in an informed debate on the matter. They do not care if they look silly in here or if they look silly when they go to Paris. They think there is some political advantage in it for them. I think they may find that they are wrong.

Every time the government opens its mouth on Kakadu, it diminishes the tourist value of the park. We have had considerable publicity through Crocodile Dundee in the last 12 months, both here and in the United States of America and shortly shall have more in Europe. The Tourist Commission is spending large amounts of money to encourage people, both in Australia and overseas, to come to Kakadu. Great free publicity was given to the park last week as a consequence of the visit of the Prime Minister, yet every time a member of this government opens his mouth he sets out consciously to diminish the tourist value of the park.

Mr Speaker, do you remember the comments on Kakadu National Park? There are only 100 barbecue plates in the park. We know now that it is the best-funded park in the whole of Australia and that \$8m is being spent on it this year. \$4.5m is being spent on capital works in the park. The Minister for Conservation will find out about that when he goes out on his official tour of inspection. Also, he should speak to the Ministers for Conservation in the states and obtain their reaction to funding for Kakadu. It is the best-funded national park in Australia. Do we hear any comment, any congratulations, any recognition of that from the members opposite? No, we do not. All we hear about is 100 barbecue plates. Mr Speaker, I can assure you that there is much more out there than 100 barbecue plates.

The other problem with this argument is that, if we are to compete for tourists on the world market, it is essential that we obtain, and keep, World Heritage listing for this major national park. It is a great selling point. There are probably 2 major selling points for this great national park overseas. One is that it is a World Heritage area and the other that it is an area where people can see 40 000 years of Aboriginal culture. It can be seen not only in a static form but in the form of Aboriginal people actually living there at present. These are the great selling points for this national park.

If the Northern Territory government had its way, and 20 mines were spread through Kakadu National Park, there would be a very real danger that we would lose our World Heritage listing even for stage 1.

Mr Coulter: Rubbish.

Mr SMITH: It is not rubbish at all, Mr Speaker. A close examination of the World Heritage listing requirements of UNESCO show that it is not something that is there for ever and a day. There is an ability for that listing to be cancelled as well as for the creation of new listings. World Heritage listing will not be continued for a national park which becomes Swiss-cheesed with mines. That is the problem with this argument that only 1% of Kakadu National Park would be mined. It would be much simpler to come to grips with the issue if that 1% were in 1 area. On the minister's figures it is 1% of the whole but will be spread over 20 different areas.

The analogy that is widely applied about a Swiss cheese is very apt. As I have said before, if stages 1 and 2 are Swiss-cheesed by mining operations, there is a very real risk that the World Heritage listing of that great national park will be lost. If we lose that listing, people will not visit the park in the numbers that they would if it were listed.

Mr McCarthy: We already have a World Heritage listing on stage 1.

Mr SMITH: If you had listened, you would have picked up the argument.

Mr Speaker, on this issue, we need to be very careful that we do not throw out the baby with the bath water. I conclude by urging members opposite to support the amendment moved by the member for Arafura. That amendment provides for an opportunity for more reasoned debate at a later stage in these sittings, when members of the government and the opposition have been provided with more information by the government on its position and concerns, an assessment of the UNESCO listing and an indication of where the Northern Territory government believes Kakadu stage 2 falls short. At that stage, we can have an intelligent and informed debate about it rather than the nonsense we have heard from the government benches today.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I trust I will receive the same courtesy as was extended to the Leader of the Opposition, particularly in respect of the member for Arafura's loud and continuously-operating mouth.

I oppose the proposed amendment by the member for Arafura. It is nothing more than an excuse to avoid the thrust of the motion that has been put before this Assembly. It provides nothing of benefit to the Assembly. The fundamental fact is that the members opposite have totally missed the point. We have learned a great deal today about the beauty of Kakadu. If members opposite had listened to what I said in speaking to this motion, they would have heard that we support the inscription of Kakadu stage 1 on the World Heritage List. We maintain the view that Kakadu is and should remain on the World Heritage List. In our view, it meets the criteria for such listing for both natural and cultural reasons.

It is in respect of Kakadu stage 2 that we oppose listing. It is Kakadu stage 2, not Kakadu stage 1, that is the subject of controversy over the federal government's current application for World Heritage listing. In my opening remarks in this debate, I made the point that there may be parts of Kakadu stage 2 that should be included also in the World Heritage List. However, it is certainly our view that not all of Kakadu stage 2 meets the

criteria. This is where a fundamental error has been made by the opposition. Its members say it is up to the government to prove that it should not be listed.

World Heritage listing is supposed to be a very significant matter that is subject to very strict investigation and determination so that its significance is not devalued. However, the opposition says that stage 2 should be on the World Heritage List and it is up to the government to prove that it should not be. That is back-to-front, Mr Speaker. It is up to the federal government, the ANPWS, and whoever else is making application, to prove that it should be on the World Heritage List. The fact is that the ANPWS and the federal government are working through the back door to avoid having to go through that exercise, and that is what we are objecting to. They have breached their own guidelines for applications for World Heritage listings in Australia. They have ignored completely documents that they themselves published in February this year. They have ignored those completely, despite undertakings that they would abide by them. They have tried to get UNESCO to avoid carrying out an investigation into the area to see whether it justifies listing. That is what we object to.

I said earlier that, if it can be proven that Kakadu stage 2 can and should be included on the World Heritage List, so be it. But I would like to go through the proper channels rather than sneak through the back door to satisfy the demands of some political game in Canberra. There is no doubt about what this is all about: it is to settle down the left wing faction of the ALP caucus in Canberra and to try to win a few votes among left wing environmentalists of Sydney and Melbourne. It has nothing at all to do with genuine environmental considerations.

In June this year, a month before this dramatic decision, the Prime Minister himself called on the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment to properly consider the question of mining under the Kakadu Plan of Management. He thought the possibility should be looked at. The Minister for Resources and Energy, Senator Gareth Evans, was promoting the view that we should look at multiple land use in Kakadu and properly examine the issue. What happened? The federal government took a quite correct decision to honour our national contracts with France for the supply of yellowcake, and thereby avoided having to turn up at the World Court and look like geese.

Mr B. Collins: Geese.

Mr HATTON: Geese.

That is a fact and, as a consequence, there are demonstrations occurring all around the south-eastern parts of Australia. The Prime Minister came under all sorts of pressure from his own caucus and had to find a few crumbs to throw to the members of the left. What did he throw to them? Parts of the Northern Territory, that is what he threw. That is what this business is really all about. If the ALP and the federal government are genuine about Kakadu stage 2 being included on the World Heritage List, let the matter be properly examined by independent people, as is required by the UNESCO guidelines. If it is listed then, we will all agree that it should be included. We do not believe it will meet those criteria. We know what the country is like out there. I can tell the member for Arafura that I have been over that country. I have been going over that country for 10 years.

Submission after submission has been put to the ANPWS about that area. We have issued the challenge continuously to put the matter through the proper

channels. Let it be investigated properly. But this federal government has political debts to pay. That is what it is trying to do and we are going to fight it, because we seriously believe that it will devalue the currency of World Heritage listing. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, the federal government is devaluing World Heritage listing and, on a subsequent investigation, that more than anything else could threaten the World Heritage listing of stage 1. We do not want to risk that because stage 1 is of particular importance to the Northern Territory. It is particularly important environmentally and it is particularly important for the tourist industry, as opposition members have quite adequately pointed out.

In my speech, I referred to the environmental impact of Ranger. The member for Stuart and others on the opposition benches made great play of the fact that Ranger is not within Kakadu National Park. They are quite correct because, when Kakadu National Park was declared, the federal government drew a little square on a map around the Ranger deposit and refinery and excluded that little island from the national park. Geologically, geographically and environmentally, it is still in the middle of that region. Certainly, people are able to salve their consciences and say that they do not mine in national parks. They get around it by excising those areas from national parks.

Mr B. Collins: And, alternatively, putting them in Arnhem Land.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I am not even going to address the issue of Nabarlek. I accept the fact that it is in Arnhem Land and not in Kakadu National Park.

I have said consistently that the areas in Kakadu stage 1, and the wetland areas, can and should be protected and that there should be no threat to the protection of that environment. We have very serious questions with much of the area of Kakadu stage 2 and similarly with Kakadu stage 3. We want Kakadu stage 2 investigated properly. On our information, and we have considerable information, we say that it will not stack up. Almost every site that the opposition spoke about today is in Kakadu stage 1: Obiri Rock, Nourlangie, Yellow Waters and Magela. All those are in stage 1 except for a section of Magela which is in stage 2. None of us is disputing the importance of those areas or of the escarpment country. They are all in stage 1; we are talking about stage 2. That is the difference between what we are saying and what the opposition and the federal government are trying to obfuscate the community with. There should be no confusion on that issue.

We heard a great plea for magpie geese. Magpie geese do need to be protected and we are protecting them, not only in Kakadu but in all of the wetland areas in the Northern Territory. Their nesting habitats are being protected by environmental controls imposed by the Conservation Commission on the Mary, the Adelaide and other river systems. I know the fights that I had as Minister for Conservation with my other departments such as Primary Production and Lands to ensure that those areas were properly protected. That protection has been given for some time now and it will continue.

The opposition's suggestion that the magpie goose is an endangered species in the Northern Territory surprises me. For years, there has been gazettal of open seasons for the hunting of magpie geese and not once has any opposition member ever complained about that. Action is taken to ensure that there is no threat to the species. The opposition has never objected to the fact that there is a hunting season for magpie geese. All of a sudden, we have to protect Kakadu National Park because the geese are vanishing from the face of the earth. That is the argument that members opposite are trying to project.

The member for Arafura made great play of the fact that we need to protect the environment in Kakadu stage 2. He may be interested to note that it is already part of a national park and subject to environmental control. We are not debating whether or not it is part of a national park, because it already is. That discounts every one of the arguments that the member for Arafura put today.

The question before us is whether the area is of such significance and uniqueness in the world that it justifies being listed as part of the World Heritage. Is it that significant and that unique? We question that because no evidence has been brought forward to suggest that it has to be or should be. It has not been investigated. The federal government is trying to avoid the processes of investigation by the manoeuvre of saying that it will extend the area rather than declare a new area. It is a cute little trick and that is what we are objecting to. It is trying to avoid a proper examination of that area.

Mr Speaker, I must also advise the Assembly today ...

Mr B. Collins: On Harry Butler.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I just heard an interjection about Harry Butler. The member for Arafura yet again today used this Assembly as a coward's castle to defame a member of the public, knowing that that person cannot defend himself. If he has the guts, let him walk out the door and put up or shut up. It is all very well to stand in here and abuse and defame people. Will he walk outside the front door and repeat what he has said so that the man has the ability to defend himself? While he is at it, perhaps he could take the member for Stuart with him to repeat the statements that he made in the Assembly this morning. It is exactly the sort of thing that happens when environmental consultants put a view contrary to that of the radical left. They are subjected immediately to personal abuse and denigration; they are attacked, not on the arguments they have presented but on their personality or on some red herring issue. Members should look at the arguments presented by Mr Butler and argue about them; they should not argue about the man. The member for Arafura is just playing a few cheap political tricks and defaming a man in an environment where he cannot defend himself.

I want to advise the Assembly that a statement has come from the federal opposition. It arrived just after lunch, and I should make the Assembly aware of this to let people know that it is not only the Northern Territory government that has particular concerns about this matter. It is a joint statement by Senator Peter Durack, QC, shadow minister for resources and energy, and Senator Stan Collard, shadow minister for arts, heritage and environment.

The opposition today decided to oppose the nomination by the Hawke government of stage 2 of Kakadu National Park for inclusion in the World Heritage List. The government announced its decision to do so on 16 September, and the nomination papers were forwarded to UNESCO on 17 September. On 18 September, the government tabled in the parliament a new Plan of Management for Kakadu National Park which provides that no operations for recovery of minerals will be allowed in the park, except on existing mineral leases.

The opposition's motion to disallow the Plan of Management is expected to be voted on in the Senate today. It is important that, when UNESCO considers the nomination in Paris next week, it is aware



of the view of the alternative national government which supports the strong objections to listing raised by the Northern Territory government.

Should the nomination be accepted, the Liberal and National Parties will, on return to government, take steps to seek delisting of stage 2. Today's decision, detailed reasons for which are given below, is consistent with the view expressed yesterday by distinguished Australian conservationist, Harry Butler, and Professor Kenneth Mellanby of Britain.

A series of reasons are then listed, and the statement continues:

The opposition supports the strong stand being made against the nomination by the NT government and authorises that government, in its appearance before the World Heritage Committee, to make known the opposition's views.

Mr Speaker, there is every reason why this matter needs to be investigated. There are serious questions about whether or not that area should be included on the World Heritage List. Already it is part of a national park, subject to environmental control, albeit in a very degraded state at the moment because of a multitude of factors: noxious weeds, feral animals, grazing over many years, and salt intrusion as a consequence of the effects of buffalo on the dunes. The question is not whether it should be part of a national park and brought under environmental control; the question is whether it meets the criteria for World Heritage listing and whether it represents a unique artistic achievement, a masterpiece of the creative genius, or has exerted great influence over a span of time, or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture, monumental arts, or town planning and landscaping, or bears a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a civilisation which has disappeared, or is an outstanding example of the type of structure which illustrates a significant stage in history, or is an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement which is representative of a culture and which has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change, or is directly and tangibly associated with events or with ideas or beliefs of outstanding universal significance and meets the test of authenticity in design, materials, workmanship, or setting.

For natural property, areas nominated must be: outstanding examples representing the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history or outstanding examples representing significant on-going and geological processes, biological evolution and man's interaction with his natural environment, as distinct from the periods of the earth's development ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister's time has expired.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Noes 19

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

Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Dale  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Hanrahan

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

Amendment negatived.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, in view of the unreasonable advice from the Leader of the Opposition that the motion will not be supported, I seek leave to move a further amendment.

Leave granted.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move the following amendment: omit from paragraph 1 the word 'unanimously'.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

#### PETITIONS Exclusion of Mining in Territory Parks

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 174 citizens relating to the exclusion of mining exploration or operations in Northern Territory parks and reserves. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read.

To the Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth: that a national park is a relatively large area set aside for its features of predominantly unspoiled natural landscape, flora and fauna, permanently dedicated for public enjoyment, education and inspiration and protected from all interference other than essential management practices, so that its natural attributes are preserved; that mineral exploration and mining operations are not essential management practices; that proposals to amend the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act to facilitate mining and exploration in Territory parks and reserves should not proceed; and that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly should move to exclude any mineral exploration or mining operations from Northern Territory parks and reserves. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly give due consideration to the above and the petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

### Katherine Fire Station Staffing Levels

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 430 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to staffing levels at the Katherine Fire Station. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read.

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth their concern at the decision of the Northern Territory government to reduce the number of firefighters at the Katherine Fire Station from 5 to 2. Your petitioners believe that, with the present rapid growth of Katherine, this decision will lead to a deterioration of fire services in Katherine and an increased danger to life and property. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly take whatever action is necessary to reverse this decision and to leave Katherine with 5 full-time firefighters.

### Sealing of Wells Creek Road

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 86 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to the sealing of the Wells Creek 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.

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth that, because of 3 new subdivisions, an increased volume of traffic is now using the Wells Creek Road and the surface is rapidly deteriorating and becoming hazardous for residents and causing damage and excessive wear and tear to vehicles. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Assembly will authorise sealing of the Wells Creek Road and your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

### LETTER FROM DEPUTY PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE QUEEN

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received a letter from the Official Secretary to His Honour the Administrator advising of the receipt by His Excellency, the Governor-General, of the following response from the Deputy Private Secretary to Her Majesty the Queen to the expression of loyalty from the members of the Legislative Assembly to Her Majesty:

My dear Governor-General,

I am commanded by the Queen to ask you to convey her sincere thanks to the Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly for their kind message of loyal greetings which Her Majesty received with much pleasure.

Yours sincerely,  
Robin Fellows.

TABLED PAPER  
Annual Report of Auditor-General 1985-86

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the table the annual report of the Auditor-General for the year ended 30 June 1986.

MOTION  
Annual Report of Auditor-General 1985-86

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly take note of the paper and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER  
Report of New Parliament House Committee

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the table the report of the New Parliament House Committee on the proposal for the interim accommodation for the Legislative Assembly in the New TIO building.

MOTION  
Report of New Parliament House Committee

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later date.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER  
Report of the Distribution Committee

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Act, I table the 1986 Report of the Distribution Committee.

On 27 March 1986, His Honour the Administrator directed the Distribution Committee to redivide the Territory into proposed electoral divisions. The redistribution became necessary due to significant population changes in certain areas of the Territory which have occurred since the electoral distribution in 1983. The procedures to be followed in conducting a distribution are set out in the Electoral Act.

The Distribution Committee consists of the Chairman, who is presently Mr Norm Campbell, the Chief Electoral Officer and the Surveyor-General. When directed by the Administrator, the committee is required to divide the Territory electorate equally into proposed divisions subject to a 20% tolerance. In making the distribution with respect to each division, the committee must take into account such things as community interest, means of communication and travel, population trends and density, and the areas and physical features.

Following public consultations, the committee is required to forward its report to the minister for tabling in the Legislative Assembly. If the Assembly approves the report, the Administrator is required to declare the names and boundaries of the new divisions. The new divisions will come into effect for the purpose of the next general election. Following the Administrator's declaration, the Electoral Office must amend the rolls to reflect the new division boundaries and advise those electors affected.

In the present case, the committee provided its report to me on 4 November 1986 after complying with the necessary statutory requirements. In the report, the Distribution Committee advises that its recommendations are predicated on the basis of 1 vote 1 value, the tolerance provisions are utilised to take account of projected growth patterns and the distributions are based on the retention of a 25-seat Assembly. The committee reports that, as at 11 September this year, there were 69 985 electors on the Territory roll giving a quota per electorate of 2799 electors with an upper and lower tolerance limit of 3359 and 2239 respectively. In the context of the Territory's continuing growth, it is worth noting that the figures for total electors and quota size in the Distribution Committee's last report in 1983 were 59 509 and 2380. This is an 18% jump in the number of people enrolled in the past 3 years.

The committee sees the Territory electorate as being clearly divisible into several discrete urban communities with the balance of the electorate being widely spread over the Territory. The urban areas of Palmerston and Katherine are identified as areas expanding at a far greater rate than the broad spectrum of the electorate and thus as requiring consideration as discrete urban communities in addition to Darwin and Alice Springs.

Members will note that the final recommendations of the committee are little changed from the proposals put on public display several months ago. 12 objections were received to the proposals but most of the recommended alterations were not supported by the committee. The exceptions were the incorporation of the Mataranka community into the Katherine division, the incorporation of 5 cattle stations to the west of the Stuart Highway into the Barkly division and the adjustment of the boundary between Araluen and Braitling divisions to conform to the boundary of the stock reserves.

The committee notes the difficulties of simultaneously meeting the quota requirements for each division together with all of the other legislative criteria for a distribution. It therefore adopts solutions which it considers to be the best fit for present and projected requirements.

The committee notes that, with the high mobility of the Territory population, electoral rolls become outdated very quickly and that the most effective way to bring rolls up to date is to conduct habitation or doorknock reviews. A full habitation review has not been conducted since 1983. However, the committee acknowledges that the rolls are probably not as badly out of date as might be expected. This is because of various elections that have been held since 1983 which have had a review effect on the rolls. Nevertheless, the committee recommends strongly that a habitation review should be conducted immediately prior to each future distribution.

Mr Speaker, I would like to place on record the government's appreciation of the committee's work. In many instances, the committee was faced with the difficult task of reconciling opposing views within the required legislative framework. The committee approached this task with professional competence. The result is a well-balanced report which I commend to the Assembly.

MOTION

Report of the Distribution Committee

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the provisions of the Electoral Act require that a redistribution will not be effective until the Legislative Assembly passes a resolution approving the redistribution. I move that this Assembly resolve, in terms of section 18(1) of the Electoral Act, that the distribution of the Territory into electoral divisions as proposed in the 1986 report of the Distribution Committee be approved.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

TIO Annual Report

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I wish to advise honourable members that, in tabling the Annual Report of the Territory Insurance Office on 28 August 1986, I made an error in my statement to the Assembly, copies of which were distributed at the time. I refer honourable members to the fifth paragraph of the statement, which included the words: 'Compared with a loss of \$2.4m last year ...'. In fact, the statement should have read: 'Compared with a profit of \$2.4m last year ...'. I ask members to take note of the correction.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Care of the Physically and Intellectually Disabled

Mr SPEAKER: I advise honourable members that I have received the following letter from the member for Nhulunbuy:

Dear Mr Speaker,

I wish to propose under standing order No 94 that this Assembly discuss this morning, as a definite matter of public importance, the failure of this government to provide adequate care for the physically disabled and the intellectually impaired citizens of the Northern Territory.

Yours sincerely,

Dan Leo.

Member for Nhulunbuy.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to tell a children's story. Unfortunately, it is not a fairy story. It is a very sorry story for the Northern Territory. It is about the government's complete lack of compassion for a small but very needy group of young Territorians, the physically and mentally handicapped. This government has been so busy running around on its glamour projects in the name of so-called development that it has ignored the development of this group of Territorians. The opposition has raised this matter of public importance today as a result of numerous inquiries and complaints received about the issue of care for the physically handicapped and intellectually impaired people living in the Northern Territory.

These people come from all social backgrounds. They include European, Aboriginal and migrant Territorians. Their collective difficulties, apart

from their physical and intellectual disadvantages, can be attributed to this government's blind pursuit of financial absurdities while ignoring the plight of the Territory's disabled. This callous disregard, which would not be tolerated in any other part of Australia, is best demonstrated by the inadequacies within the present so-called system.

There is no sound statistical data on which policies can be formulated. The role of government in service delivery can be best described as invisible. Persons in isolated communities are largely, if not totally, ignored. Finally, funding levels are inadequate and fail to address existing and emerging problems.

We all agree that the Territory is a fine place in which to live. It is not such a fine place, however, if you are a handicapped person. Over the last 8 years, despite a plethora of surveys, this government has ignored the needs of handicapped persons and offered no solutions or hope. Like Scarlet O'Hara in 'Gone With the Wind', it will think about it tomorrow. There are probably 1500 handicapped persons in the Territory. That figure represents 1% of our population, and it is a conservative estimate. Our studies indicate that the level could be as high as 3%. We could be looking at as many as 4500 people, although we know of only 300 individuals. We do not know about the real numbers because this government hopes that, by ignoring the needs of these people, the problems will simply go away. They will not go away; they will increase. Experts in the field will confirm that we need 40 more beds immediately. We urgently need 1 fully residential cottage at Somerville, and it is critical that we address the crisis in respite accommodation here and now today.

For the information of honourable members, respite is like insurance for families. It is the opportunity to have a break from the constant attention involved in caring for people who have problems. In many cases, parents feel guilty about accessing respite because it is seen as a reflection of their inability to cope or because they perceive that others have greater needs. However, in the Northern Territory, desperate parents plead continually for respite. The profoundly handicapped need constant care. We cannot hide our problems in southern institutions any longer because they will not take any more of our people. At present, about 60 Territorians are in this position. It is a disgrace in itself that 60 Territorians are exported because we cannot take care of them. In Darwin, we have only 12 beds available at Somerville for severely handicapped people. There are 6 other beds at the Harry Chan Nursing Home.

Those people who have less difficulty need the opportunity to partake as much as possible in normal life. The right to generic services like housing, education and employment is the accepted philosophy in the care of these people throughout Australia. They need a variety of facilities such as hostel accommodation, supervised cottages and flats. The Handicapped Persons Association has accommodation for 6 people as part of its vocational training orientation.

Quite clearly, the situation can be seen to be desperate. The problems are so many and so depressing that it is hard to know where to begin. The minister acknowledges the need but, as usual, there is no money. People are tired of this continuously-used fob. Of course there is money, but it just is not available for the needy; it is available only as window dressing for the electorate.

Mr Speaker, imagine the situation for families with severely physically handicapped children who are also intellectually impaired. The lack of respite facilities means that their care is virtually a life sentence for the family. The cost of respite is approximately half that of residential care. The nationally-accepted annual per capita cost for residential care is about \$35 000 per annum. Respite is a key element in the prevention of long-term residential care. It allows the families to cope longer. We must recognise this fact and help these people care for their own for as long as they are able. Without respite at adequate levels, the problems will be exacerbated for both the handicapped people and their families. The Harry Giese Centre can only provide respite accommodation for up to 12 persons yet the old Darwin Hospital has remained empty and vandalised for 4 years. It is now being turned into another glamour project.

The Harry Giese facility caters for children only. What, then, is available for adults? The answer is absolutely nothing. That demonstrates a total lack of planning. In the Northern Territory, we have groups of people who are in no-man's land. Young adults who, as time goes by, will become mature-aged people, have no place to go for respite or residential care.

The situation is worse outside Darwin. We have not yet had the foresight to plan for the needs that will develop eventually in Palmerston, Tindal and isolated communities. If the statistic of 1 in 1000 persons needing care is accurate for the Territory, and that is a nationally-accepted statistic of persons who need care though it could be higher in the Northern Territory, then Palmerston alone will require facilities for 90 people if the rural area is included in that general Palmerston precinct. We have 4 or 5 kids there now who need residential accommodation urgently. Where shall we place 90 more? We cannot keep pace with current needs, let alone increased or changing needs. Mr Speaker, I can assure you that if we just ignore this it will not go away.

Where to begin is with the families. The right to family integrity is something that we take for granted. However, it must be considered that that involves not just stress for parents but also the siblings. Violent or behaviourally-disturbed young adults are a danger, not only to themselves but to other members of their families. Caring for 1 such child would be enough, but protecting other children and living in constant fear of tragedy places unimaginable stress on a family. It is not occasional; it is constant. As the child becomes older, the situation worsens for the family. Occasional care so that a parent can go shopping is not respite. We have no extended families. Our population is young and, therefore, grandparents and other relatives cannot give a parent a break within the comfort of the family network, with the trust and care that they can give.

After a recent visit to the Territory, the Office of the Disabled reported that our parents are an extremely desperate group. This was believed to be due to dissatisfaction with the level of service available. And what about the single parent families, Mr Speaker? About 25% of families with handicapped children are single parents. It does not take much imagination to comprehend the stress that those people must go through. The extra cost associated with raising a handicapped child must place single parents in personal hell. At best, for 2 parents to manage a budget on a single income must be extremely difficult, given the hidden costs involved with this care. Here we have the poverty trap at its very worst, and the pressure just to survive, both emotionally and financially, pushes people inevitably and inexorably over the brink.



Studies all indicate that incredible stress, physical health breakdown and nervous disorders are frequent companions to the heartbreak that these families face. Is it any wonder that divorce and suicide are realities for these families? These parents not only have to cope with the child but have to spend a large part of their time chasing money. Mr Speaker, people in these desperate situations have enough to do without having to chase around the countryside fund raising.

In every direction, their life choices are extremely limited. These families cannot even go to the Darwin Cinema if one of them is in a wheelchair. Even if the person could get up the stairs in a wheelchair, he could not stay in the aisle because of the fire regulations. A handicapped person without a wheelchair would have no hope of escape should there ever be a fire in that establishment. These are people who will not be paying to see Crocodile Dundee even if they could afford to.

Given the limited facilities available, most of which are geared towards children, what are we going to do about the needs of these people as adults? Children have a habit of growing up and, inevitably, the handicapped child grows into a handicapped adult with a quite separate range of needs. With its current philosophy, this government would assume that the parents will go on caring forever. The minister says that it is a community responsibility, but what happens when the parents die? Whose problem is it then? It is a whole-of-life problem, it is a whole-of-family problem, and it is also society's problem. But, more than that, it is the government's responsibility to care for its citizens.

Mr Speaker, social workers will tell you that these families need counselling and support as much as the children need care and treatment. If it is possible under our pedestrian system, early diagnosis is good for the child, but the diagnosis has a devastating effect on the family as the reality of the future dawns. The priority must be to support the whole family. The government must support the entire family unit. It is little wonder that babies have been abandoned, mothers have overdosed and fathers have left home when one considers the future that these people face. We have created a helplessness and a hopelessness by the current lack of funding. Desperate people find desperate solutions. We must address people's real needs. The early intervention program gives the greatest opportunity for development.

But what happens to these children in our system after they are 6? Some go to special schools and units attached to schools. Some are integrated into ordinary schools. However, due to our appalling lack of therapists, and I mean the full range of therapists, we do not come anywhere near to maintaining the momentum of that necessary developmental activity. Schools can only cater for a certain number of children. They can only cater for the number of places available. There is little point in identifying children if places are not available. It would appear that the education system also is under-resourced in this area. Not only do we need therapists but specially-trained teachers also. We do not have nearly enough, and the pool of available teachers will diminish due to lack of training opportunities. There is talk that the South Australian external study course for special education will cease and, if that happens, where will we train people in the necessary skills?

The high level of burnout and turnover among these teachers is another area of great concern. These people have strains placed upon them that, I am sure, no person in this Assembly has ever had to face. In fact, the whole area of care for the disabled and for the intellectually impaired in the

Northern Territory is a complete disaster. Our attitude has been one of apathy and neglect. The problem encompasses not only those children who are born handicapped or impaired but also those whose disability results from illness or accident. It is estimated that 13% of the population has some sort of disability. Most people can live a normal life, but it is something that could touch all our lives at some time. You or I, Mr Speaker, could need care tomorrow. It is a prospect we should all consider, and we should pause for a moment to imagine ourselves either as one of these parents or a person afflicted by a less than perfectly-functioning body.

I could go on, Mr Speaker, to horrify you with case histories and examples, but that sort of shock tactic should not be necessary among feeling and reasonable people - and I hope that there are still a few of those in the Assembly. All sympathy and no action brings little comfort to this group in our community. In every direction, we are totally under-resourced. Every aspect of our service provision is inadequate. The media has been prominent lately on this issue and I am sure members will be aware of some of the tragedies in our midst. We do not need another excuse, Mr Speaker. There is insufficient time. If the quality of a civilisation were measured by the way in which it cares for its less able members, then I am sorry to say that we would rate very low indeed.

There are many other aspects of this issue which need to be brought to the attention of the Assembly. I have raised just a few. These people in need do not have time for further government procrastination. How many more abandoned children, suicides and other tragedies will it take to get action? We need immediate attention in 3 areas. Firstly, the 15-16 year-old age group needs residential facilities. Secondly, respite facilities are needed for the behaviourally disturbed and handicapped who need special care and accommodation. Finally, the 16-plus age group requires at least 1 cottage for accommodation. An increase in respite facilities is needed now.

Proper planning and consultation, the establishment of infrastructure, service provision programs and essential support for families and their disabled members is the minimum we should provide to assist these people to help themselves. Life with dignity is not something that people should have to earn. All the government has to do is help. I am ashamed to have to raise this issue because I too am a Territorian. The degree to which we have denigrated our fellow Territorians is a disgrace to this parliament and to this government. When is this government going to stop playing games and get on with the job of caring for those people who desperately need our assistance? These people continue to live lives of quiet desperation in appalling circumstances because of this government's inactivity.

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, after listening to the member for Nhulunbuy, I am concerned that he really does not know what it is all about at all. It is a national problem. No one is denying that people who are handicapped, either physically or intellectually, have very real problems. That is the situation throughout Australia and the world. However, the member for Nhulunbuy obviously is not aware of the various programs that have been implemented by the Northern Territory government. He is not aware of national programs where both the Commonwealth and the Territory governments are looking at these problems. He stands condemned for bringing a matter of public importance before the Assembly without knowing what it is all about.

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased that this issue has been raised today because there has been considerable debate about it lately and there are many people in the community who have misconceptions about what the government is

doing. The terms 'intellectually handicapped' and 'physically handicapped' cover a whole range of disabilities ranging from minor to multiple disabilities. We are speaking about an extremely emotional issue, and I would be interested to know how many meetings the member for Nhulunbuy or other members of the opposition have attended to discuss these matters. I can assure you that I have attended those meetings, and I am well and truly aware of the very real emotional factors involved.

The government has to meet the very wide and diverse needs of the community. It has provided, and will continue to provide, a great deal of assistance in caring for physically disabled and intellectually impaired Territorians. Whether the member for Nhulunbuy knows it or not, it is generally accepted that, far from doing nothing, we are giving a lead to Australia in many cases. For example, in the Territory we are trying to integrate handicapped people into the broader community. We have had a great deal of success in the areas of sport and education. Government policy enables handicapped children to attend schools. We have schools that are built to cater for the needs of handicapped people. We have a government policy in respect of access in public buildings. At enormous cost, buildings are upgraded to give access to handicapped people. Yet we hear from the member for Nhulunbuy that none of this happens. What a load of nonsense! So many steps have been taken as a result of government initiatives.

We are not hampered by the old habits of institutionalisation as occurred in the states 50 years ago. You, Mr Speaker, would be aware of that. Professional advice is that we should be moving away from institutionalisation to smaller community organisations such as Somerville Homes which is funded totally by the government. I will come back to that issue because I think it needs to be spelt out.

There is no question that health care is expensive. No state or territory can have a perfect health service, but this government does care and is trying to meet the widest possible range of needs. This is illustrated by our distribution of funds. It is annoying to see that the member for Nhulunbuy has no idea whatsoever of how much the government spends. I will refer to a few areas where support is given.

Under the heading of residential care, by means of grants-in-aid, the Department of Health funds a wide range of services and facilities. In 1986-87, the residential cottage at the Alice Springs Spastic Centre received nearly \$114 000, which represents a 100% salary subsidy. The Bindi Centre in Alice Springs received \$64 602 for 2 residential cottages for intellectually disabled adolescents and adults, plus supplementary funding from the Commonwealth. The Handicapped Persons Association was funded for its residential care cottage for disabled adolescents and adults. Somerville Community Services was fully funded for 2 residential care cottages. Bunyip House for severely disabled children received \$185 000 and the coordinator's salary was 80% subsidised by the Commonwealth. Read Cottage for adolescents and young adults received \$30 000 with additional Commonwealth funding of approximately \$215 000, including a subsidy for coordinators of both cottages. Somerville receives a further Northern Territory grant of \$42 000 to cover payroll tax on the organisation's entire activities. St Mary's Child and Family Welfare Service in Alice Springs received nearly \$96 000 for its residential care cottage for disabled children. Our total funding commitment in the residential area last year was over \$500 000 and, if Commonwealth funds of \$370 000 are added to that it can be seen that government has supported residential care to the tune of almost \$1m.

The Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth government have worked together on this issue. Obviously, the member for Nhulunbuy has no idea about these discussions and meetings. The Northern Territory Department of Health and the federal Department of Community Services are represented on the Residential and Respite Coordinating Committee which was formed to provide a cooperative forum for the very reasons that the member for Nhulunbuy mentioned: we need to make assessments and obtain statistics so that we can plan where we are going. This coordinating committee has been set up with community organisations so that government can monitor and plan the development of services. That is happening and he should know about it.

It was largely as a result of the work of this committee that assistance was provided to allow 2 additional residential homes in Darwin, Somerville Community Services and the Handicapped Persons Association, to become operational in 1984-85 and 1985-86. Funding for new services in 1986-87 was devoted to assisting the Bindi Centre to open its second residential home. These developments show that, despite a period of financial constraint which is largely being foisted on us by the Commonwealth government, recent initiatives have been taken by the Northern Territory government in the expansion of residential care services.

Mr Speaker, we come to respite care and great play was made of this. I acknowledge that people who have handicapped children do need a break. The Department of Health provides grants-in-aid funding for the Harry Giese Centre, the NT Spastics Association, for its respite care services. The total grant of over \$400 000, with Commonwealth funding of approximately \$175 000, includes provision for respite services. I might say that many people believe that Somerville Homes is funded independently. The government funds Somerville Homes. We rely very heavily on the support that people such as those involved in Somerville Homes give to the government.

The Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments provide funding, under the Home and Community Care program, to the Red Cross and the Sponsor Family Association. The Red Cross provides respite care of a few hours or overnight in the recipient's home. The Sponsor Family Association arranges in-home care in either the home of the sponsor family or that of the sponsoree. The Day Care Centre in Parap, funded by the Commonwealth and the NT governments under the HACC program, will accept clients 18 years and over with any disability with the exception of people who are incontinent or those requiring 1-to-1 attention. The centre is prepared otherwise to give any person a trial. Family Care arranges in-home care and care for children 0 to 12 years of age. There are presently 12 disabled children under care, some of whom are in part-time or respite care. The service is assisted by a subsidy from the Commonwealth government.

Mr Speaker, I could go on to speak about the assistance that is given to many groups by the Northern Territory government. Some of the young people who have been identified as needing residential accommodation might be able to remain at home with adequate support services. The Home and Community Care program is designed for that particular purpose. There is great potential to make better use of existing resources in relation to respite care. However, better coordination of the various respite operations, coupled with proper assessment of individual and family needs, is necessary. This matter is to be addressed soon by officers of the Commonwealth Department of Community Services and the Northern Territory Department of Health. Quite frankly, I am surprised that the honourable member, who appears to have an interest in this matter, is not aware of these discussions.

Allied health professional staff are engaged to a large extent in providing services for disabled people. The Department of Health employs 8.5 occupational therapists, 15 physiotherapists, 14 speech pathologists and 3 social workers. The Department of Education employs 1 physiotherapist, 6 speech pathologists and 2 occupational therapists.

The member for Nhulunbuy says that the Territory has an appalling lack of therapists, but let me point out that this is a problem throughout Australia. It is very difficult to obtain people who have the necessary qualifications. That does not apply only to the Northern Territory government but also to the various organisations who need specialist people to help them and cannot get them. We provide 15 scholarships to send teachers away to learn about special education.

We also have assessment and coordination programs. I have mentioned the HACC program. Estimated expenditure for the program in 1986-87 will be in the vicinity of \$400 000 by the Northern Territory government and \$670 000 by the Commonwealth government. That encompasses a whole range of services. There is also the Disabled Persons Bureau and the Commonwealth has a scheme to provide aids for disabled persons. A whole range of rehabilitation services is provided. The NT Department of Health and the Commonwealth Department of Community Services are currently reviewing rehabilitation services in the Northern Territory. We have a seating clinic at the Royal Darwin Hospital and people there are doing a tremendous amount of work. There is also the Helen Phillips Child Health Assessment Clinic and special education.

Let me refer to special education because I was the Minister for Education for a number of years. Education facilities provided for handicapped children in the NT are as good if not better than those provided in any state. If the member compares the staffing ratio and available resources, and he wants to check this out ...

Mr Ede: What a load of rubbish!

Mr HARRIS: The member mentioned that he did not know how many handicapped children there are. There are 432 handicapped children being catered for by 66 teachers and approximately 55 teacher aides within the school system in the Northern Territory. The ratios are 6 to 1 children to teacher, and 8 to 1 children to teacher aide. The overall ratio is less than 4 to 1. I can agree with the member for Nhulunbuy that we have not even scratched the surface, but the Northern Territory has moved towards meeting the demand.

Mr Speaker, that gives some indication of the services that have been provided. I too have been very concerned about recent reports in the media concerning certain matters. The comment was made that, anywhere else but Darwin, a handicapped child could be enrolled in a special residential school during the week and return home at the weekend. My information is that there are no government-run residential schools for handicapped children in Australia. We are aware that, in New South Wales and Victoria, education is provided in residential schools run by large community organisations. However, it is interesting to note that some of those facilities are considered to be institutions and are in the process of closing down in recognition of the principle of normalisation as the least restrictive alternative. The children are being moved into other accommodation where they will travel to and from school. There are still waiting lists for residential respite care in the other states.

Obviously, the member for Nhulunbuy is not aware that there is a difference between disabled people and disabled people who have behavioural problems. There has been some comment in the press in relation to this aspect. As I mentioned on talkback radio, we are looking towards having someone live in the home for a period in order to give the family a rest.

We have also heard that the number of handicapped people could double next year when handicapped people are repatriated to the Northern Territory from southern institutions. We have 24 intellectually-handicapped people and 3 psychiatric patients in South Australia at the moment. This costs the Northern Territory government \$750 000. In the future, those people will be repatriated to the Territory but, at the moment, no decision has been taken to repatriate them, apart from an understanding that some may be repatriated as facilities become available.

We could talk about petrol sniffers from South Australia. There are young South Australians who are attending the Alice Springs Hospital at present. We pick up the tab for that, not South Australia. These are real issues that must be addressed and the government is addressing them. Fortunately, we are able to talk with the South Australian and Western Australian governments in relation to those problems and we will come to grips with them.

In relation to Down's Syndrome persons, there are differing views within the association itself. Some people accept the direction in which the Down's Syndrome Association is going but others say that it is moving in the wrong direction. There was a statement in the press that the South Australian Down's Syndrome group was receiving more funding than the Territory group. In real terms, the Down's Syndrome Association receives \$9667 per person in the Territory and, in South Australia, the figure is \$2265.

The Commonwealth government established a review of programs for disabled people and the Leader of the Opposition is aware of that. The Department of Health and the Disabled Persons Bureau have commented that, in many ways, the Northern Territory is ahead of the rest of Australia in implementing the recommendations of that report. The member for Nhulunbuy should be aware of that.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased the matter has been raised and there are many issues that I could still address. The opposition should be aware that often government wants to help but is frustrated by a lack of available staff. In conclusion, might I say that the member for Nhulunbuy is way out of touch. Far from doing nothing, the government is doing a great deal because we are determined to meet the health requirements of people in the Northern Territory. I wish that, before opposition members raise an issue such as this, they would at least have the courtesy to see me and talk about it. I am happy that the issue has been raised here and, if there are further questions to be asked in relation to it, I will be only too pleased to take them on board.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, once again, we have the Minister for Health promising that he and his government intend to do this, that and the other. I have spoken on other occasions in the Assembly about the facilities that we have for handicapped people and I have drawn the minister's attention to them. It is time that the minister and the Northern Territory government started to spend some money on some of those services that the opposition has expressed concern about in the Assembly and outside.

In his speech, the member for Nhulunbuy outlined many of the problems that continue to plague physically-handicapped and intellectually-impaired people in the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, I am sure you will agree that the picture is depressing and only prompt action by the NT government will give some dignity to these people and save lives and families in the Northern Territory. To date, the government has shown no willingness to apply itself to accepting responsibility for the care of these people, and recent media events have shown and expressed that. Unless this government shows some initiative immediately, the circumstances of these people can only deteriorate. To this end, I will make some suggestions which I hope that the minister and the government will accept and adopt in the future.

Lack of planning is an excuse for having done nothing. We believe quality decisions are based on quality information. We cannot plan or make decisions if we have no information. In fact, we would not build casinos based on a guess about their viability - or maybe we would. But, essential services cannot be planned or provided for handicapped people if we do not know how many there are, how severe their condition is, whether they are 6 or 60 years old, Aboriginal or European, or whether they are near help or not. No information is available, and it must be if we are to be effective and efficient in this vital area. The information must be gathered and managed properly.

We believe the Disabled Persons Bureau must be given adequate resources in order to become an effective agency and not just a token created as a political gesture for the International Year of the Disabled. As an umbrella organisation advising government, its role must be truly active as it was intended to be originally. It is entirely appropriate that this bureau should be the focus for coordinated activity. The new philosophy of integration, not institutionalisation, for disabled citizens has to be promoted and funding must be provided to support these people and the groups that have roles to play in this field.

We hear the words 'economic restraint' often from this government but, as a society, we must care for these people and offer them dignity and independence. These people need help now. Other states have lotteries and community chests; our lotteries would not fund 1 facility. If gambling proceeds can be used to support less fortunate people elsewhere, why not here? The casinos could be the source of some benefit to this community if the taxes were as they should be. The revenue could well be directed to the care of the needy. The income generated this way would enable agencies to plan on a more certain economic basis rather than at the whim of a minister or the Cabinet. For instance, agencies could develop triennial funding based on present and projected needs.

These people need more money. They need professional care and support, as the member for Nhulunbuy indicated. They need more therapists urgently and, to attract them here, we need to pay them at least as well as the states do. As the minister said, speech therapists, in particular, are in short supply, but we urge him to keep seeking the type of people that we need here. At the Henbury Avenue School, there are at least 40 children who need speech therapy at all times. At the moment, they are lucky to receive 2 hours per week. This is disgraceful.

The trend these days towards normalisation for handicapped people means that communication skills are paramount. How can we hope to cater for these needs if we pay less than other states? Why would professional people come to live in isolated areas, with all the associated stresses, for equal or less

payment than they would receive in a dynamic environment? We pay more for everything else to be supplied, so why should we expect not to pay more for the services of these highly-skilled people?

We need an educational program to train our own specialists in this field. Dedication and a vocation are not enough but, in many areas, they have to suffice. If we do not plan to train our own people, we will continue to have to compete on the open market for specialists. We are campaigning for statehood. Professional self-sufficiency is an important aspect of our argument. The Darwin Institute of Technology and the University College of the Northern Territory must provide training in these skills. Aboriginal people have special problems which need sensitive attention. We acknowledge the need for that in other areas, and this is no different.

A close study of the New Directions Report, which the minister referred to, and the implementation of its philosophy and, more importantly, its plans and policies should be undertaken immediately. When a national review and survey has been conducted, we should take the opportunity to assess its findings. We do not need yet another committee or review which is the usual style of this government. I urge members to familiarise themselves with this report on new directions. We need some new directions of our own in the Northern Territory. These unfortunate disabled people have no directional future here.

Mr Speaker, the organisations working on behalf of such people are very willing to do more but they simply lack the means. The job they are doing is superb but we must help them to do more. We know of 43 people in Darwin alone who will need some sort of residential care by 1996. The oldest such person now residing here full time is aged 20 years. There will be at least 20 more adult people by 1996 and we have no plans or places for them. At the Henbury Avenue School alone, there are 3 profoundly handicapped children for whom residential care is an immediate and critical need. In order to supply this residential care, the committee needs to come up with real solutions and this government must implement its proposals.

These people are realistic and deeply involved in these issues. They know the situation the families are in. They are aware of the lack of money and live with that constantly. They recognise the needs. They are the experts. We do not need another instant expert or an adviser from somewhere else which is the course of action the government usually adopts. We have the expertise in the Northern Territory and I urge the government to seek out those people who have that experience. Our handicapped people are citizens of the Northern Territory and must have their right to independence recognised. We must give choices and opportunities to each according to his or her abilities. This is the hallmark of civilisation.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, this subject is undoubtedly always a matter of public importance and this Northern Territory government has always regarded it as such. However, in my view, the way in which it has been presented to us today is nothing more than a rather cheap and almost sick political point-scoring exercise.

I would like to direct the attention of the member for Nhulunbuy to another problem that this government is facing in the area of care for the behaviourally disturbed. I am quite amazed that neither the member for Nhulunbuy nor the member for Arnhem even touched on the subject, particularly as they represent areas that are largely occupied by Aboriginal people. I would like to talk about the problem that is being created for the Northern



Territory government through the phenomenon of petrol sniffing. At present, 22 young people are in Alice Springs Hospital suffering from the effects of petrol sniffing. One of those people happens to come from the Northern Territory, but let us not be too happy about that statistic. Let us not worry about the cost to the Northern Territory of the children who are coming from interstate. Really, that is not our major concern. Our major concern is not anxiety about the funding. It is not to worry about having a cheap point-scoring exercise in political terms, but to try to come terms with the problem that is facing us.

Isn't it amazing that these members of the opposition who represent predominantly Aboriginal communities will not raise their voices on the subject at all? All they do is what they have been doing for years in those communities, and that is patronise the Aboriginal people. They create what I have called the Peter syndrome, by assisting the people to a stage where they have to come back to these so-called representatives, cap in hand, to be helped a little further along the line. That is not the way the Northern Territory government intends to approach the problem. I would like to tell this Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory about the way we are going, without any assistance from the members of the Opposition even though it is to the credit of members of their own party in other states that they have had the integrity to see this problem for what it is.

It is quite clear that the members of the opposition in the Northern Territory have no idea of the nature of the various components of the subject they have raised here today. It is wide-sweeping and tremendously varied. We now have about 90 people in Alice Springs who could be classified as behaviourally disturbed. They can be looked after by a couple of means. If magistrates take the advice of psychiatric advisers, they can take action under the Mental Health Act and send these people to facilities that are already in place in the Northern Territory under the responsibility of the Minister for Health. These people require care, treatment and control. They are incapable of managing themselves or their affairs. If they are not under adequate care and control they are likely to cause death or serious bodily harm to themselves or another person. Quite clearly, the Mental Health Act is in place and there are facilities in the Northern Territory for those people to be cared for.

There are other types of behaviourally-disturbed people. They are people who are roaming the streets of the various cities and towns of the Northern Territory. They do not come before the courts of the land because, whilst they might behave in an unacceptable way, they are not breaking the law. The younger people in that category can come under my care and control under the Child Welfare Act. It is unfortunate that, after their 18th birthday, that legislation is not adequate to cover them. You might ask why the government does not introduce legislation that does. The reason is that it would have far-reaching implications.

Next, there are the behaviourally-disturbed people who act in such a way that they cause problems in the community. They might be committing minor offences such as breaking windows or having a slap at somebody as they walk down the street. They come before the courts. These people suffer from various behavioural problems and probably no 2 of them are disturbed to exactly the same degree. Every jail in the land contains people who are behaviourally disturbed for one reason or another. Our major problem, which is growing at an incredible rate, is caused by petrol sniffing.

As the member for Nhulunbuy indicated, the white community has taken responsibility for the care of its disabled children. However, petrol sniffing occurs in the Aboriginal communities. I do not know of 1 white person who has been hospitalised in the Northern Territory because of petrol sniffing. That point is appreciated by Aboriginal Affairs Ministers throughout Australia. In particular, I cite Hon Clyde Holding and Hon Ernie Bridge, who is the Western Australian minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and is himself an Aboriginal. I have taken note of this problem since I became Minister for Community Development and assumed responsibility for Aboriginal affairs, juvenile justice and correctional services. I raised the subject at the Aboriginal Affairs Ministers' conference in Cairns some time ago. I signalled then that I would be looking to all ministers to cooperate with the Northern Territory government which once again was acknowledged as leading the field in terms of working on the petrol-sniffing problem. I spoke about the new Local Government Act in the Northern Territory, particularly the part that relates to community government.

For those who have not been listening, the community government scheme under our Local Government Act is recognised throughout Australia. At a meeting yesterday in South Australia of ministers responsible for local government, ministers acknowledged that they are using our legislation as the model for revamping their acts. It was acknowledged that the community government scheme was an innovation in the management of Aboriginal affairs not previously seen in Australia. Professor Turner supported that view in his report. I know that the opposition will be fishing at some time in the very near future for another crony like Mowbray to try to put together an academic document that will criticise the Turner Report. Mr Speaker, I will give you a cryptic clue to the name of the fellow who will be coming up with this rather staggering assessment. His name can be likened to Santa Claus and also to the best premier in Australia. If that can be put in Hansard, we will see if I was on the ball when this guy's report comes forward. The opposition will use it in some way to criticise the Turner Report because it supports the community government scheme that has been introduced in the Northern Territory and applauded by the rest of Australia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, community government gives Aboriginal communities the opportunity to look to community-based care of their behaviourally-disturbed people, particularly those who have arrived in that condition through the terrible phenomenon of petrol sniffing. Several committees have operated in places such as Kintore, Docker River and Yuendumu. They have been extremely successful in assisting people to almost eradicate petrol sniffing. Other Aboriginal communities, such as one at Umbakumba, have used traditional law, if you like, and physically beaten children involved in petrol sniffing. I am told that the beatings were so severe that bones were broken. Bones healed, the petrol sniffing stopped and the problem has ended at Umbakumba. Just across the way, the community at Angurugu has an enormous problem. They have not come to terms with it yet, but they are looking to the community government council system to bring pressure to bear on the community to have the children - and it is their suggestion, not mine - taken away from the parents to Bickerton Island where they will be exiled with an elder until they have petrol sniffing out of their system. I applaud their initiative but many do-gooders around the country will not.

I have had discussions recently in Perth with Hon Ernie Bridge, and he has agreed to cooperate fully with the Northern Territory government. Likewise, we have agreed to give him access to all of the knowledge we have available on petrol sniffing. There was a Health Ministers' conference in Canberra last week, which convened a special meeting on combating the problem of petrol

sniffing. We have agreed to meet all relevant ministers and departmental personnel in Alice Springs on 28 November. It is an effort across 4 states to come to terms with the problem. The sole reason I raise it in this particular discussion is because I want the opposition to cease its efforts to turn problems like this into cheap political point-scoring exercises.

Mr Ede: You are doing that right now.

Mr DALE: Let me illustrate how 1 of your colleagues does it. On 3 November this year, the member for MacDonnell went on the airwaves telling everybody that he did not know what to do about community-based care for victims of petrol sniffing. He wanted to ask a few friends on some committee down in Alice Springs about it but he had not really been able to come to terms with it. Nevertheless, he accused me of washing my hands of the problem because I put the onus back on the communities - an onus that the communities are willing and able to take on board. Let me read part of a letter to the member for MacDonnell from 2 medical officers at Kintore, a place that had enormous petrol sniffing problems:

Petrol sniffing, which was previously a problem amongst children and teenagers, is presently in abeyance and has been so for over 3 months thanks to the constant vigilance and intervention by many community movers and the sensitive encouragement, support and guidance by the petrol sniffing team...

That is an initiative of this government.

Mr Ede: It is a community initiative.

Mr DALE: Listen to this; it will do you the world of good.

Lastly, but importantly, is the incidence of psychiatric disease at Kintore. There are 3 adults who in other societies would certainly require regular hospitalisation if not institutionalisation. There are also 2 retarded teenagers, one of whom is severely handicapped by his illness. These people, however, play a role in their family structure and are superbly cared for by family, relatives and friends. The same can be said for the few orphans and other individuals who have lost their true family ties ... It can be achieved only in the setting of low stress lifestyle which the Pintubi have been able to achieve and maintain by being very much in control of their own community.

That was signed on 27 August, 6 weeks before the member for MacDonnell went on air saying that he had given up on the problem and that he did not want to know about it. I know about it because I have been to 23 communities in this Northern Territory since I became minister. I have asked questions about this problem in every community. Every one of them is game to have self-motivation, self-management and self-esteem by looking after its own problems if these do-gooders in the opposition will give it the opportunity.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1986-87  
(Serial 218)

Continued from 28 August 1986.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to start my discussion on the budget by referring to the Treasurer's speech. The first point that I would

like to raise relates to his comment that this government made some important broad decisions as soon as the budget parameters became clear: first, no deficit would be allowed and, secondly, no additional taxes would be imposed to raise revenue. I would like to discuss the concept of a budget deficit.

The average worker is on about \$20 000 a year. If he spends \$22 000, he gets a bank overdraft or loan to cover that. He would not say that he had balanced his budget; he would agree that he had a deficit. This government says that it has never had a deficit. Is it trying to say that no government instrumentalities obtain loans to cover the shortfalls in their revenue? That is a load of rubbish! Of course they do. They probably have hundreds of millions of dollars piling up in debts. There is an argument for this of course: the people who use the services in the future will pay for the services when they use them. That is the argument for deficit funding. Let me read again: 'We rejected the temptation to take the soft option and go into deficit budgeting for the first time in the Territory's history'. He went on to say: 'Ultimately, it is far better to take the hard decision in the year in which cuts appear rather than live in the hope that the following year will be a bonanza'.

What a fraud, what a complete phony! Mr Speaker, we know that we have to even things out by borrowings. We cannot build a major powerhouse one year and cut everything else back in that year to balance the budget. 'Ultimately, it is far better to take the hard decision in the year in which cuts appear rather than live in the hope that the following year will be a bonanza'. That is what I object to. The Treasurer moralises about balanced budgets when he has every intention - and rightly so in my opinion - of raising loans and rolling forward old loans. That is fair enough but he should not come in here moralising about the issue. This government has been operating a deficit for many years and no doubt will continue to do so.

He said that no new or additional taxes would be imposed to raise revenue. That is a far worse piece of deception. No new taxes - isn't that cute, Mr Speaker? 'This was not taken lightly as the bids for resources outstrip the financial capacity available to us. Again, extra taxes would have provided the easy way out. We are confident that the decision not to increase taxes will have a strong and positive impact on expectations and attitudes in the private sector and act as a real stimulus to the economy'. What he did not say was that government charges would go through the roof.

Mr Dale: Charges or taxes?

Mr EDE: That is exactly the point that I am making. This cute Treasurer makes these cute differentiations between taxes and charges. When the average person in the street pays a dollar, he pays a dollar. He knows it has gone to the government and that, whether it is a tax or a charge, it still costs him. I will refer to a few of these increases that struck me. Marrara Sporting Complex fees are up 150%. School bussing charges are up about 200%. Water charges are up 50%. Sewerage charges are up 85% and motor vehicle charges are up 70%.

Mr Dondas: Bulldust. Where did you get all that from?

Mr EDE: I got it from your colleague's budget.

We see what phonies the government members really are. I am sure they will be able to explain to the people of the Northern Territory, whose electricity bills rose by 7.5% at budget time and will rise by another 2.5%

next month, that they should be happy because their taxes were not increased. I am sure that I cannot explain the difference to the car owners or the people who are receiving massive hikes in their water and sewerage charges, but I am afraid those suffering citizens have not seen the last of it. While this is the most rubbery budget I have seen, it will not stretch to cover the figures the Treasurer would have us accept.

Look at those figures, Mr Speaker. I would like to draw your attention first to the government charges that we have been told about so far. For example, the rises are: registration of cars - 10% to 15%; registration of trucks - 20%; driving licences - 100%; learners' permits - 200%; basic water charge - 25%; and sewerage rates - 33%. I would like to compare the increase in these charges with the increase in the budget charges. The car registration and licence fees rose by an average of about 25%, but the total budget item rose by 70%. Water charges rose by 25% but the total budget item rose by 50%. The sewerage charges rose by a third and the total budget item rose by 85%. We are told that we can accept this because there will be an increase in activity in these areas which will make up the amount in the budget.

First, in relation to motor vehicle charges, the point is absolutely ridiculous. During the last year and the previous year, the actual number of vehicles registered in the Northern Territory declined. In September, the figures were far worse than in the previous September.

Mr Coulter: That's right. The fringe benefits tax.

Mr EDE: I will take up that point about the fringe benefits tax. Is it true that the Treasurer did not know about that when he framed this budget or is it true that he could not work out that there would not be a 70% increase in the number of motor vehicles registered this year to give him those figures? In fact, he will only increase his total amount, at the very best, by something like 25% by those charges and he will have an enormous shortfall in that budget item.

Take a look at housing, Mr Speaker. I refer now to the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures. The number of houses being built gives a reasonable indication of whether the increases in the water and sewerage budget items can be achieved. Looking at the figures for 1980-81 until 1985-86, if we look at the total number of residential dwellings, we will see that the figures for the respective years are 2084, 2047, 2200, 2700, 2889 and 1808. In 1985-86, we had the lowest number of building approvals in the Northern Territory since at least 1979-80. Where then did the Treasurer get the idea that there would be a substantial increase this year, which would allow him to increase the total amount that would be received over and above the per item amount? As I said, both in private and public new residential buildings, the increase that he had to work on was the lowest since 1979-80. I have no relevant figures prior to that date. How are we going this year?

Mr Manzie: When they put an end to gearing up the interest rates. You ought to be ashamed. Why don't you say something about it?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, please may I have your protection in this matter.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney-General will cease his cross-Chamber interjections.

Mr EDE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It really does get wearing.

This publication provides an outline of what has been occurring during September and the prospects for the building industry for the future in the Northern Territory. It states: 'In the September quarter, 42% of respondents reported worsened trading conditions while 60% of firms expected further deterioration in the December quarter. On-site employment fell by 11.7% and a further reduction of 18.4% was expected'. That is for commercial building. For residential building: 'In the September quarter, 63% of respondents reported that work availability, sales levels and overall trading conditions were much worse than in the June quarter'.

We are starting from a base which is the lowest since at least 1979-80, and we are going downhill fast, Mr Speaker. 'This has caused substantial reductions in calls for subcontractors. 75% of respondents expected sales inquiries to diminish further, causing employment, availability of work, and overall trading conditions to decline in the December quarter'. The housing outlook for the Northern Territory is extremely bleak.

We have shown that growth in vehicle numbers will not produce the extra amounts that are required. Because of the lack of growth in housing and buildings, extra revenue will not come from water and sewerage charges. There is only 1 option left to the government, I am afraid, and that is to belt the taxpayer again. It was not game to hit him for the total amount all at once so it will do it by stealth. It hit the taxpayers for half at that stage and will hit them for the other half later on. In fact, Territorians have many reasons to fear the new year. Let me see, how many reasons there are.

Let us assume that the current slump does not become too bad and we end up square on motor vehicle registrations for the whole year. It does not look that way at the moment but I will be optimistic. I will not retire to cloud cuckoo land where the Treasurer drew up this budget. I will say that we will end up square for the year. The increases that I have spoken of will give the Treasurer a 20% to 25% increase in total revenue for the full year. They were put in place on 1 September so will run for 10 months of the year. A simple calculation shows that, last year, they brought in \$5.2m. The 25% increase will yield \$1.1m for a whole year raising the total to \$6.3m. However, the budget figure is over \$9m. Where were will the Treasurer obtain the \$2.7m that he needs to balance that item in the budget? I fear that there will be another round of increases. Probably, they will be introduced over the school holidays because that is when the government usually sneaks in its nasties.

What percentage increase will be required from individual car owners to reach that budget figure? The longer the Treasurer leaves it, the bigger the increase will have to be in this year. By early next year, an additional 50% would be required on top of the current 25% if the budget figure is to be reached. It is a matter of simple arithmetic. My message to Territorians is that they should register their cars now and renew their licences as soon as they can for as long as they can.

What about water? The basic rate went up 25% and from this the Treasurer says 50% more revenue will be obtained. Where will the missing \$2.5m come from? Will the Treasurer ask his colleague, the Minister for Community Development, to slash away some more of the subsidies to pensioners? He has been at it already. Will he raid the money boxes of the old timers who gave their lives to make the Territory what it is today? I have written to the Minister for Community Development about this. He has not answered my letter yet. He will have to answer it because I shall pursue it.

What about sewerage charges? The increase there is about 30%, but revenue is up 85%. Don't forget, Mr Speaker, that the housing industry is in a real slump. The government says growth will meet the difference, but does the Treasurer seriously expect us to believe that we will have 85% more toilets this year? We will need them if we are to meet the \$2.5m shortfall in this item. Probably, there will be another savage increase in charges.

As I said, Territorians have many reasons to fear the new year as these few examples have shown. No doubt, when the government imposes those massive extra burdens on Territorians, it will find a new or, more probably, an old excuse to show that it is all the fault of the federal government. We heard that tale when the Treasurer brought down his budget. He said that services would be reduced because the federal government had singled out the Territory for special treatment. He spoke particularly about the cut in the subsidy to NTEC. I could produce figures to show that the actual cut was less than the \$21m the Treasurer spoke of, but what I want to talk about is the money that this government wasted last year by locking itself into various projects. The money lost there was far greater than the alleged \$21m reduction in the subsidy.

I refer to figures that are well known. For example, in 1985-86, casino taxes were forgone to the extent of \$3m. \$5m was involved in the Alice Sheraton. With the purchase of assets, Yulara cost \$20m and a variable lease arrangement of \$7m - a total of \$35m. And what is proposed for 1985-86? Mr Speaker, I am not saying that the federal government saw this wastage and decided to teach the errant Northern Territory government a lesson. I have no evidence of that at all. What I am saying, and I will say it over and over again, is that, if that money had not been wasted, it would have been available for the average person, the needy, the elderly, the sick and the small businessman.

Mr Speaker, let me discuss what the Treasurer referred to as the cornerstone of his budget: the capital works program. He made great play of this in his speech. He told us of the \$445 000 for a shooting complex in Alice Springs which was to be finished in time for the Masters Games. What a load of rubbish that was! Of course, it was not finished in time for the Masters Games. That was a farcical piece of grandstanding. There were also the 25-horse stables to be built at Tennant Creek and an indoor dressage arena at Palmerston. We know where the Treasurer's interest lies. I remember a picture of the Treasurer and a horse that appeared in the NT News. I think the caption was: 'Is this our new Chief Minister?' The wags had fun with that particular picture. The comment I liked best was: 'Horse favoured in party ballot'. I thought it was a fair estimation of the relative chances of the Treasurer and the horse.

I drew up a table to indicate just where all this money was being spent. There were many items whose relative merits I was wondering about. I drew up a table of figures under the following headings: Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, Barkly, other rural electorates and Stuart. I went through the budget and identified amounts for works in progress and new capital works and I made allowance for some items such as the Bicentennial Roads Program, which is totally federally funded, and some of the education items which are said to be subject to Commonwealth agreement. I averaged out the budget allocations in terms of per capita expenditure in each region. The amount spent for each elector in this year's capital works program is: Darwin - \$5500; Alice Springs - \$6000; Katherine - \$28 400; Barkly - \$10 300; other rural electorates - \$2800 and Stuart - \$996.

Mr D.W. Collins: It is time they changed their member.

Mr EDE: That would be the response. It is a blatant and disgusting piece of politics if I ever saw one. I can understand the Katherine situation. It was interesting to have a look at Barkly. Most of the work was in progress at the time the member for Barkly was Chief Minister, and there was not very much new happening there. However, it is true that Darwin electors get 5.5 times what my electors get, Alice Springs 6 times, Barkly 10 times and Katherine 28 times. I believe that this is something which should make this government hang its head in shame. It is continuously harping on about the work that it does in Aboriginal electorates and the enormous amounts of money that are spent attempting to redress the balance. Let it never be said again that this government is pouring enormous amounts of money into rural electorates, because those figures prove that it is not. From my experience, it has not been the case for many years.

I am preparing a series of questions on mines and energy and Aboriginal affairs and I will raise those when I go through this bill more thoroughly in the committee stage. However, I would like to discuss the Department of Mines and Energy budget now, because it has a direct bearing on a number of other debates which will occur during these sittings.

My first point is that planned expenditure has dropped by \$4.6m. That is not something to panic about; it reflects a job well done. Rum Jungle has been cleaned up. After all these years, that blight on our countryside has been removed. I would like to congratulate the workers involved, thank the federal government for the money it provided and request the Northern Territory government not to create any more Rum Jungles. It is just not worth the risk.

There is one area where the Department of Mines and Energy budget has been cut savagely by more than 15% in real terms. I refer, of course, to the poor lame duck that should not be in this department, the Industrial Safety Division. I will read out its functions because it is very important:

The functions are to reduce accidents in the work place, to make industry aware of safety, and to encourage self-regulation. To meet this objective, the division carries out the following activities: safety training, promotion of safety, safety functions, provision of advice to government on policy and legislation relating to safety, and administer inspections under the Dangerous Machinery Act, the Construction Safety Act, the Dangerous Goods Act and the Explosives Act.

The division suffered a reduction in funds of \$159 000. The net decrease reflects the reduced level of staff. The division is already unable to carry out its function and has suffered a reduced level of staffing. This reflects the attitude of this government to industrial safety. It is prepared to cut funds, reduce staff numbers and carry out fewer inspections.

The other major area which lost funds was mines. If we investigate that, we find that the decrease is attributable to 'planned rationalisation' in mine site inspections. I know what that means, Mr Speaker. It means fewer of them.

Let me come finally to Stuart, that most underdeveloped of electorates, the one that has been deliberately and maliciously slighted in this budget. We have very little to celebrate. We will cop all the increases but very few



of the benefits. During the committee stage, I will be asking a lot of questions about housing. For example, I want to know why vast sums were spent to seal Yuendumu airstrip when the west camp situated only a couple of hundred yards away still has only a couple of stand pipes for washing and drinking. I want to know the rationale behind spending millions on these types of projects rather than on preventive health programs. Millions of dollars a year are spent in keeping children in hospital when the same amount, spent wisely, would keep them out of hospital. It would keep families together and prevent associated problems.

Mr Speaker, I could talk at length about the Tanami road, about the maintenance program to keep the Lajamanu road crew going, about housing in the electorate of Stuart generally, and about the youth centre at Yuendumu which has a direct relationship with the success or otherwise of the anti petrol sniffing program there. I will be asking questions in relation to the International Decade of Water and the chances of this government succeeding in meeting the standards established during that decade, which is now 6 years past with Australia still lagging very badly behind. I will be asking about the development of the Plenty Highway to facilitate those rock and reef tours that I am always talking about. I will be asking about the schools that have not been built in the electorate, the number of students who do not have access even to primary education let alone quality secondary education. These are issues that I will be taking up in the committee stage of this bill. I would hope that the answers will offer some reason for the anomalies that are very obviously contained in the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I rise to express some pleasure about the budget that the Treasurer has brought down. We are speaking to the Appropriation Bill. 'Appropriation' means 'setting aside for a particular purpose'. In this case, it relates to money at the disposition of the Northern Territory government, raised partly by government charges and taxes in the Northern Territory, partly from Commonwealth contributions under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding of 1978, and partly from specific purpose grants to the Northern Territory on the basis that the Territory is completely unlike any state because of its juvenile stage of development and partly because, in respect of financial matters, it is now considered to be a state. The Territory is in rather an anomalous position because, in terms of some considerations by the Commonwealth it is regarded as a state and, as such, receives a state-like share of funding.

In the melding and dovetailing of these various sources of finance, one thing is paramount and has been paramount since self-government: the development of the Northern Territory can occur only if there are people in the Northern Territory. People are necessary for its development and therefore they must be attracted to the Northern Territory. They have to be housed here, their children have to be educated here, hospitals and health services have to be provided here, shops have to be built to sell the necessities of modern life to them and their recreational needs must be taken care of. There is a spin-off as more people are needed to provide these services and, in turn, require services. All this needs to happen without recourse to deficit budgeting.

From time to time, opposition members have commented on this government's continuing practice of keeping in the black. They have expressed some derision at our naive and simplistic approach in doing this. I will bet anything that any state premier would surrender his family jewels, and you know what I mean, to be in that position instead of having the deficit budgeting which occurs in the states. In any electorate, more development can

always take place but, in any budget, appropriations to all electorates are considered.

In my electorate, we have seen the formation of the Litchfield Shire this year. I hope that the Litchfield Shire will receive favourable financial consideration for its establishment but I have received no official notification of this even though I have been told roughly what the amount is. It is roughly what was promised by the previous Minister for Community Development. It is very nice that those promises have been fulfilled but I would still like to see the hard cash shown in the books of the Litchfield Shire.

I must say that very little information has been volunteered to me about the funding of the Litchfield Shire, either before or after its formation, from officers of the Department of Community Development. I am not saying that I have not obtained this information in 1 way or another. However, there were only 2 occasions on which information was volunteered to me by officers of the department and both of those occurred before the formation of the Litchfield Shire. It appears that somebody is trying to do a mushroom job, not only on me but on other people in the rural area. However, we always obtain the information in the end. Considerable effort is expended in obtaining the information and it would make it easier all round if we could all work in peace and harmony and information be volunteered willingly.

Mr Speaker, when reading the budget papers, one sees that there are many interesting developments taking place in the rural area and in my electorate. Closer inspection shows that these can be divided into projects specifically for the benefit of residents there and projects planned for others who use our rural area as their community playground and recreation area. I do not object to this development at all, but I want to make it clear that there are 2 sorts of development in my electorate.

One of the most important projects planned there is the proposed building of stage 1 of the new Berry Springs School at a cost in excess of \$1m. This is welcomed by the parents and the teachers in the area. It takes account of the increasing numbers of children in the rural area. The population in the rural area is increasing as is evident to anybody who has read the report of the Distribution Committee.

There will be building at the Humpty Doo Primary School. The room that is planned for the Humpty Doo Primary School will be used by the pre-school for the time being. While I am on the subject of the Humpty Doo Primary School, I would like to draw honourable members' attention to an event at the weekend which was the first of its kind in Australia. I refer to the successful mango fair which was held at the school and I will speak about that at a later date.

I would like to comment also on the success of the farm at Taminmin High School. Recently, the Minister for Education gave a grant of \$15 000 for further work at the farm. This was welcomed with open arms by the school authorities and the farm manager. It will be money well spent and it would do honourable members no harm to inspect the work being done at the farm and to learn of the projects planned for the future. The zucchini crop there will bring in not a few hundred but a few thousand dollars this season.

I was very interested in an item relating to Aboriginal housing in the correctional services appropriation. Alice Springs Prison has a project to employ prison labour to build simple housing for use in isolated communities in central Australia. These simple dwellings are built of substantial

materials and consist of 2 rooms and a verandah. Evidently, there is a ready market for them. I would be interested to know whether a similar scheme could be initiated in the Darwin Prison. Under 'New Works', I note that there is a housing project planned for inmates of the Darwin Prison at a cost of \$70 000. I have been told that some changes would have to be made to adapt these dwellings to withstand cyclonic conditions in the Top End.

If they could be built at a lower cost than the \$10 000 for which they were built in Alice Springs, they would find a ready market not only in isolated Aboriginal communities but also among many of my constituents in the rural area. Many of my constituents have limited means and, after they have bought a block, put down a bore and erected some fencing, they do not have a great deal of money to spend on a big house. If they could start off with a very simple dwelling, they could progress slowly to build a better house. It would provide a very good source of cheap housing if that project could be started at the Darwin Prison this year.

I welcome the upgrading of the Arnhem Highway indicated in the budget. The widening of the Arnhem Highway in my electorate will decrease the possible incidence of road accidents. It is very straight and people tend to speed on such roads. There are places where children cross to go to bus stops and to the Humpty Doo Primary School and Taminmin High School. If the highway is widened and consideration given to speed signs, there will be increased safety for all road users.

Mention was made in the budget of various roads in the rural area passing to the control of the Litchfield Shire. This was first intended to occur on 1 July but was delayed until 1 October. The people in the rural area must realise now - and I have been telling them for some time, as have elected members of the Litchfield Shire Council - that the kitty for road building is not bottomless. People will have to limit their demands for increased road services to what the budget will allow. This will create some difficult situations at times but, nevertheless, the money for bituminising more and more roads in the rural area is not limitless.

There is a major \$3m project in the upgrading of Bulldog Pass on the Cox Peninsula Road. Whilst this will be used by people in my electorate, mainly it will be used by people who live at Cox Peninsula or who visit that area. Although the Cox Peninsula comes under the Rural Planning Authority's jurisdiction, many people there do not want the block size restrictions that apply in the rural area. Although it is not part of my electorate, I know a little bit about it. Many people there wish to live on smaller blocks and there are others who want to build holiday cabins there. I believe that their wishes can be encompassed in the development of Cox Peninsula provided the smaller subdivisions do not bleed over into the rural area outside Darwin because we do not want them there.

It is very pleasing to see that there is an item in the NTEC budget of \$96 000 for on-line circuit breakers in the Humpty Doo zone substation. As honourable members know, we had considerable trouble with our electricity reticulation in the rural area during the dry. We were told that this resulted from the depredations of flying foxes. As I said then, and I believe now, that was only part of the problem. Nevertheless, NTEC was very responsive to people's complaints about paying for electricity reticulation but not receiving the supply. NTEC has done everything it can to increase the quality of the supply of electricity to the rural area since then.

Channel Island Power-station is in my electorate and \$101m is appropriated for further work on that project. We all know of the success of the pipeline to bring gas from the gas fields near Alice Springs for this power-station. We all know that the commissioning of the pipeline is ahead of time and I believe that the benefits of this scheme will not be really appreciated by the general public until it has been in operation for some time.

The importance of Channel Island should not be seen only in terms of the power-station. There are also the ruins of the old leprosarium that was inhabited by those unfortunate people until about 30 years ago. These ruins are very interesting historically. It would certainly whet the interest of members in the history of the Top End if they made it their business to inspect those ruins. If they do so, they will receive every assistance from NTEC. Channel Island also has very interesting reef areas and exposed rock formations. In addition to the very unusual power-station, it also has these other interesting features. It has an important deep water harbour which will be very useful in the future when our port facilities are developed. It will be very useful for bulk handling and for building a container terminal in the future. I think that we will hear and read a lot more about the development of Channel Island.

I am very interested personally in the development of different Conservation Commission projects in the rural area, especially in the development of the Berry Springs Zoo. It is progressing though perhaps not as fast as I would like. However, I still live in hope that it will be opened in 1988 as originally planned. It will be used partially by the locals, but mostly it will be of interest to the tourists who come to the Top End, especially those who come from other countries. With the money that is to be spent on Berry Springs Nature Park, the future of the Berry Springs area looks very interesting indeed.

The development of the Berry Springs Zoo has meant the phasing out of the Yarrowonga Zoo at the 13½ mile. However, an increasing number of people are of the opinion that, even with the development of the Berry Springs Zoo, the Yarrowonga Zoo should be retained. This has been a hobbyhorse of mine for some time and it is quite interesting to learn that a number of other people are saying it, especially bus drivers in the tourist industry who take visitors around to see places of interest in the Top End, often in a very limited time. Whilst not denigrating the Berry Springs Zoo, it is quite a distance from town. People often have only a few hours in Darwin and they want to see as much as they can. Yarrowonga Zoo is barely half an hour's drive from Darwin and, whilst the animals may not be displayed in the most ideal conditions because of space limitations, they are a representative offering of the fauna of the Top End. I believe consideration should be given to keeping Yarrowonga operational in one way or another, and I will be writing to the minister on this subject in the near future.

I will conclude my remarks by touching on the appropriation for the Department of Primary Production. Looking at the figures and taking inflation into consideration, I do not believe that the allocations are entirely satisfactory. There are reduced allocations for the plant and animal industries and agricultural support services, including research. It is very interesting to note that there is an increase in the budget allocation for corporate support services. I find that a rather cynical approach. We all realise that administration is necessary for the good working of any government department, but it seems that administration has received an increased budget allocation to the detriment of more worthy sections of the Department of Primary Production.

Because of my personal interest in the agricultural industry, I still believe that the Department of Primary Production is not the vigorous, aggressive government department it should be, when it is considered that it represents the interests of all primary industry in the Northern Territory. I do not know what it is, but something is lacking. I do not know whether it is leadership or what, but it has been lacking for some time. On reading the report and knowing a bit of the background of how it was put together, knowing many people in the department and also looking at the budget papers and considering the work for which money has been allocated, I am left with the feeling that everyone in DPP is marking time. They are waiting for something to happen.

I do not know the reason, but the Department of Primary Production people do not seem to be the leaders that they should be in the agricultural industry in the Northern Territory. They are not the leaders in aggressive research. They appear to me to be always behind industry instead of being out in front as they should be. I do not believe research should be undertaken just for the sake of it but with the aim of applying it in practical farm situations. Our government has expressed an interest in research, backed up to some extent by the resources of the Menzies School of Health Research which will have research programs with an indirect effect on animal and primary industry.

To my great regret, I believe that there is insufficient interest and interest must be generated before funds are made available. There is not enough interest in agricultural research in the Northern Territory. I do not know when this situation will be remedied. I know it is the wish of many of the officers in the Department of Primary Production to see this situation change, but I do not know when that will happen, particularly when one considers the reduced funding in this budget.

My final remarks relate to the workings of the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority. I believe that this is an active and aggressive agency in the sphere of Northern Territory agriculture. It has turned out to be the tail that is wagging the dog of primary industry. That should not be the case. The Department of Primary Production should be the senior partner but ADMA has been more effective because of its aggressive nature. It would be in the interests of Northern Territory agriculture if the Department of Primary Production could take a leaf out of ADMA's book.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak to the budget - a balanced budget framed against the backdrop of an Australian economy going down the gurgler. Our budget for 1986-87 was framed under the most challenging of circumstances and in the knowledge that there is an urgent need for expenditure restraint.

Unlike the federal government's budget, the NT budget is guided by sound management. It is a budget which will strengthen the Territory's long-term viability and growth. It will maintain essential programs and provide for important new initiatives within the resources available to us. While we are managing our economy and getting on with the job of developing the Territory, the Leader of the Opposition is incapable of anything more than nitpicking and petty quibbling in his response to the budget. All around us, we can see the effects of the gross mismanagement of Australia's affairs perpetrated by the federal Labor government. The Canberra colleagues of the members opposite had the audacity to applaud themselves on their so-called credibility as economic managers. Labor could not get its act together to manage a backyard barbecue.

Even the world's greatest Treasurer has been forced to admit that the Australian economy faces grave difficulties, so grave that we are in danger of becoming a banana republic. The terms of trade have moved dramatically against Australia with a 10% decline in 1985-86. The Commonwealth government predicted a further worsening in the terms of trade during 1986-87. The world economic recovery has not been as strong as expected. There has been little favourable impact on the demand for Australian raw materials and that is the result, at least in part, of the rapid rise in alternative sources of supply. Australian agricultural exports are in serious difficulty with both the European Economic Community and the United States subsidising exports in Australia's traditional markets.

Gross domestic product, the measure of Australia's production, slowed down to a sluggish 3.7% in 1985-86, coupled with heavily increased foreign borrowings associated with the resources boom and infrastructure programs of the early 1980s. This has led to large deficits on the current account and the alarming and unprecedented collapse of the dollar. In the year ahead, the gross domestic product is expected to grow only by 2.5%. In real terms, unemployment growth is expected to be 1.75%. Monetary and fiscal policies have been tight. High interest rates have discouraged borrowings for investment. Putting it bluntly, Australia stands on the brink of a recession. Not only was the NT budget prepared under conditions of financial stringency but in a state of uncertainty. We were mindful of the Commonwealth's reference to the Grants Commission concerning alleged overfunding of the Territory in 1983-84 and 1984-85. This reference was unprecedented in relations between the Commonwealth and the states or the Northern Territory. It is retrospective, and seeks to suggest that the Territory could recreate money already received and spent in good faith. At the Premiers Conference, the Territory received only a 3% increase in monetary terms, which was a 5% reduction in real terms. In other words, the Territory received about \$50m less than would have been required to maintain the 1985-86 status quo. By far the most significant item was the \$40m reduction in general purpose capital payments to the Territory. On top of these cuts, the tax-mad federal government has instituted a fringe benefits tax.

While the economic outlook for Australia is very dim indeed, Territorians have reason to be optimistic about the future. Of course, the Northern Territory economy has not escaped the national economic downturn. Building starts are down, particularly in housing. World commodity prices have had a dampening effect on the mining industry although activity in gold and gas remains strong. Despite these unavoidable effects of Labor mismanagement, the Territory is still the land of hope compared with other parts of Australia. In the south, the feeling is that the nation is paralysed. Up here, the Northern Territory is on the move. Why? Because the Territory government has sound financial policies, promotes development and has confidence in the future.

I want to turn now to some economic figures which indicate the health of the Territory. Population continues to grow at 3 times the rate for the rest of Australia. This is a result of government policies which promote employment opportunities and create jobs. Employment in the Territory continues to keep pace with population growth. In the year to March 1986, another 5300 jobs were created. Last month, unemployment in the Territory was only 4.3% compared to the national unemployment rate of 7.8%. Tourism is continuing to prove itself a dynamic and successful industry in the Northern Territory. It is growing at an even better rate than it did last year. Total takings for hotels, motels and caravan parks rose by 32.8%, from \$28.1m for the year to June 1985 to \$37.3m for the year to June 1986. Takings for hotels

and motels showed a significant 32.5% increase, while the increase for caravan park takings was a dramatic 37.1%.

Sound growth has been experienced in horticulture, fishing and mineral and petroleum exploration. The pipeline has been completed and soon will be supplying gas to Tennant Creek and Darwin. Let me say, Mr Speaker, that today is not only Remembrance Day, it is the day that gas arrived in Darwin. The pipeline is a prime example of what can be accomplished when a government works in tandem with the private sector. It demonstrates what a government with vision can achieve.

The devaluation of the Australian dollar over the past 6 months has opened up more export opportunities. It has had an immediate impact on the tourist industry, bringing more international visitors to the Territory and keeping at home more Australians who are now holidaying in the Territory. Today, I received an official letter from QANTAS stating that, as a direct result of a 29% growth in the traffic on the Singapore to Darwin route this year, from April next year there will be a third QANTAS service from Darwin to Singapore. That third flight will terminate ex overseas at Darwin. That is a sign of the growth and development that is occurring here.

The government is pursuing a number of initiatives to foster development of Asian markets. These include our policies on mineral exploration and mining, the Trade Development Zone, tourism offices overseas and the promotion of agricultural and horticultural export industries. This brings me to my own portfolio areas.

On 14 July, I announced administrative changes to the public service, involving the establishment of a Trade and Marketing Services Bureau and a Northern Territory Development Council. The principal role of the bureau is: to promote the Northern Territory, both within Australia and overseas, as an ideal place to invest; to act as a catalyst in identifying investment opportunities in specific industry sectors; to develop those opportunities in a marketable form; and to promote those packages to entrepreneurs. The bureau is liaising closely with industry departments: to increase awareness amongst prospective investors and trading partners of the development potential of the Northern Territory; to promote the export-potential awareness of Northern Territory industries and companies and to improve their capacity to compete in the international marketplace; to motivate industry to become more export-orientated and to facilitate the development of exports; to attract new industries, particularly those with export potential; and to publicise and monitor government policies and incentives. Already, the bureau has played a key role in undertaking a trade delegation to Brunei which resulted in increased sales of NT goods.

Dealing with the NT police, fire and emergency services, the budget allocation for 1986-87 is \$46.3m, an increase of almost \$3.4m on last year's actual expenditure. I want to touch on just a few of the initiatives under way. A new central fire station is being developed in Darwin. The design has now been completed and the station is ready for the tender stage of development at a target cost of \$4.1m. It is designed and located to provide the utmost protection to the city centre and the commercial areas at Winnellie. It will combine both the administrative and operational components of the NT Fire Service into the foreseeable future. The station is due to be completed in mid-1988 and will equal the facilities available in any capital city.

I turn to my police portfolio. Since June 1985, 72 junior police rangers have been recruited, with a further 36 to be recruited by June 1987. Rangers are being trained in public safety, conservation and leadership skills so that they can assist other youth. Assistance with the Police and Citizens Youth Club is continuing. The club will move to the Berrimah Complex in 1987 and share the Police Training Centre. The school-based community policing program is an unqualified success, with 7 constables located now throughout NT secondary schools and plans for all schools to have a constable by early 1988.

Mr Ede: All schools?

Mr HATTON: All secondary schools. Provision was made in this year's Northern Territory budget for the expansion of the program and 10 new positions have been approved in the Police Department, which will double the program size.

The success of this program, which is the first of its kind in Australia, has attracted much interest interstate. In fact, New South Wales sent a team to the Territory to look at the program to see if it could be copied in that state. Closely aligned to the Police in Schools Program is the Safety House Scheme. This scheme provides a network of safe refuges for children en route to and from school. The network is based around particular primary schools. Currently, 3 schemes are operating in Darwin and 1 in Alice Springs. A scheme is planned for Malak in 1987.

An important new initiative is the establishment of, and participation in, the national fingerprint computer system. In the budget, \$1.1m was set aside for this system. A national conference hosted in Darwin earlier this year by the police included discussions on this system. It will be introduced throughout all the states and territories of Australia and allows an automatic fingerprint reader to scan 10 fingerprint cards in 25 seconds, a process which would take a couple of hours to perform manually. A latent fingerprint reader at the scene of a crime collects prints for input to the computer. Any parameters about the criminal are also fed into the computer to hasten the search and response time. The computer provides a list of possible suspects for the police to follow up. This takes only hours whereas it could take 4 to 5 days to do it manually. I had an opportunity to see the national Computerised Fingerprint Bureau at Parramatta in Sydney. It is recognised by police forces as the single most important breakthrough in criminal investigation made during this century.

Whilst I was there, it was explained to me how great a difference this can make in the handling of cases. Very few people realise that, unless suspects have been detected, it is virtually impossible to identify a fingerprint by the manual system because to search through the some 15 million fingerprints on file in Australia for 1 set of prints would take years. This can now be done in a matter of days through the fingerprint computer system.

Shortly before I was there, the body of a murdered person was found in Sydney. The person was totally unidentifiable. The body was clothed in shorts and a shirt and there was no means of identification. The deceased person was identified very quickly through the fingerprints. The parent of the youth was informed. The parent had not realised that the youth was missing and asked where his car was. A description of the car was obtained and it was tracked down. Only 1 fingerprint was found on that car but, by putting that through the computer bureau, the murderer was apprehended successfully. That was done in a matter of 2 weeks from the time the body was discovered. Almost certainly that crime would have remained unsolved had it not been for that fingerprint identification.



Already, 1 terminal in the Darwin Bureau of Criminal Intelligence Section is linked to the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence system in Canberra. National computer links will ensure that the best possible sources of information are available to our police force. The Darwin system should be installed by Christmas this year and operable in January or February 1987, after the existing manual base has been fully entered. Once the system has been used for some time, and adequately tested, it is likely that Alice Springs and other centres will be connected.

Recently, I announced 2 administrative rearrangements in the area of women's affairs. The government's Office of Equal Opportunity is moving back to the Office of the Public Service Commissioner while the Women's Advisory Council is to report directly to me. For the past 16 months, the Office of Equal Opportunity has been within the Department of the Chief Minister. Transferring this function to the Office of the Public Service Commissioner will ensure that the principle of equal opportunity is applied within the public service in a more direct and integral way. The Office of the Public Service Commissioner has the Aboriginal Development Branch and Interpers, the Darwin bank of information on the Northern Territory Public Service.

It is important there should be close cooperation between these groups to enable effective equal opportunity measures to be implemented. Equal opportunity plans must be developed in consultation with the unions. The Office of Equal Opportunity will be able work closely with the Industrial Relations Unit within the Office of the Public Service Commissioner to ensure that consultation takes place. The office will continue to identify areas in employment or the delivery of services where equal opportunity is not available or is being denied.

The Office of Equal Opportunity will continue to play a wider role in promoting the principles of equal opportunity both in employment and the provision of services throughout the Northern Territory. The office is available to assist companies in the private sector who wish to develop equal opportunity approaches in management.

I have directed that, from now on, the Womens' Advisory Council will report directly to me instead of to the Minister for Community Development as was formerly the case. Later, I will make a much more detailed statement on women's affairs to the Assembly.

In July this year I announced that the public service would be reduced by some 400 positions by June next year. I am pleased to report that this reduction is being achieved mainly through natural attrition and by limiting recruitment, and in total consultation with the trade union movement. The Office of the Public Service Commissioner has provided me with a recent report on the success of the program. The figures provided are indicative only as not all departments and authorities are on the Interpers system yet. The figures are complicated also by the fact that cessations and recruitments refer to actual numbers while total staff numbers have been converted to equivalent full-time figures. The figures show that, on 30 October, there were 15 153 staff employed in the public sector, 303 less than at 30 June. These staff levels cover all paid staff, including Commonwealth-funded staff. Recruits for the same period totalled 794, which again covers only those reflected by Interpers. Even though there will be an overall reduction in the public service, the government has implemented a range of strategies to ensure that as many school leavers as possible are offered employment within Northern Territory departments and statutory authorities. A direction has been issued to create job opportunities within departments and authorities for NT school

leavers, including the School Leaver Employment Program. This is being conducted across the NTPS to encourage and facilitate the employment of young adults in the Territory. Aboriginal people are eligible, regardless of age. Departments and authorities are responsible for implementing this program. As at 31 March this year, the School Leaver Employment Program was responsible for placing 235 base-grade school leavers, 64 apprentices and 34 trainees.

The budget brought down by the Territory's third Treasurer is a responsible budget. It is a balanced budget, aimed at maintaining high standards of services to Territorians whilst exercising restraint. The budget was framed to ensure the continuing expansion of the Territory's economy by sustaining a climate conducive to private sector growth.

Mr Speaker, you will note that I have not bothered to comment on the Leader of the Opposition's response to the budget. He has done nothing more than carp and niggle about petty items whilst seeking to distort the economic policies of this government. The key element is that we do have policies whereas the opposition is still looking for a few to hang its hat on. I, for one, will not hold my breath. Successive CLP governments have brought down balanced budgets which have promoted the development of the Northern Territory. Labor governments, throughout Australia, have proven themselves incapable of sound economic management. From the comments of members opposite, we would have an even worse situation should they ever, God help us, find themselves on this side of the Assembly.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to canvass a number of issues briefly in this second-reading debate on the Appropriation Bill. I will reserve some other matters until the committee stage because of an unavoidable commitment that I have in 10 minutes. This has been another long day, which surprises me because we are supposed to be sitting over 3 weeks.

Mr D.W. Collins: If you have the capacity to stay with it.

Mr B. COLLINS: It does not take much to get the peanut gallery going here, even late in the day.

Mr Dale: We have to listen to something.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, despite the ratbag comments from those opposite, I wish to congratulate the government on a number of initiatives that I think worthy of commendation. The first, which I believe to be pre-eminently the most important, is the completion of work on the Alice Springs to Darwin gas pipeline. This has been the subject of a number of debates in the Legislative Assembly on previous occasions when I have described it unreservedly as one of the most significant developments in terms of the future prosperity of the Northern Territory and its economic development.

For many years, we have been plagued by a problem inherited at self-government. I refer, of course, to the diesel-fired power-station which was grossly outdated and an atrociously expensive waste of that resource for the generation of power. Indeed, although people in the industry concede quite rightly that perhaps the use of natural gas is not appropriate for the generation of electricity when other means are available, it is certainly a fortuitous fact for the Northern Territory that we have such a valuable indigenous source of power that is likely to last for the rest of the lifetime of the members occupying the seats in this current Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a significant achievement that the pipeline has been completed in response to one of our most urgent needs: the broadening of the economic base in the Territory. That is particularly meaningful in the encouragement of further horticultural development with all of the associated works, particularly chillers and coolrooms and so on up and down the track. It will assist with tourism development that is likely to occur. The generation of power is horrifically expensive in the more isolated communities. It will assist growth in the manufacturing sector, particularly where the infrastructure and energy costs currently prohibit much expansion in that area. The gas pipeline holds much promise and, in spite of the inevitable escalation of the price of fuel oil overseas, because of the size and the indigenous nature of that gas reserve, we are likely to be able to maintain the price of the delivered product to the power-station for some considerable time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, although they are relatively small, there are a number of budget allocations on which I want to commend the government. One is the provision of more school police. I, for one, was an early convert to the benefits of the school police when I actually saw the scheme on the ground at Casuarina High School and when I listened to the comments made both by teachers and the student body. I know that the police force chooses its personnel for such programs carefully, because their failure or success is absolutely dependent on the personality and attitude of the officers involved. I have no hesitation in saying, as I did in a previous debate in this Assembly, that the particular officer who kicked the scheme off at Casuarina was outstanding. It was obvious, from the changed attitudes towards the police which resulted from that officer's work at Casuarina, that the scheme was worthy of further support.

There is another reason why I am very pleased to see this budget allocation. For whatever reason, we appear to have a disturbing increase in the use of drugs in schools. We have enough trouble already, with alcohol and marijuana probably being the substances most often abused. I was interested to hear recently on AM that, despite the fact that intensive studies have demonstrated that the continuous use of marijuana does produce some detectable brain damage after many years, it is nothing compared with the permanent damage to the brain and other organs of the body produced by the excessive use of alcohol. The casual attitude of many high school children in the Northern Territory towards alcohol is of concern to me. It is almost considered to be a matter of course these days that very young children are getting drunk on a regular basis.

I know that it sounds trite, because it has been said many times before, but it deserves to be said again that alcohol advertising has considerable impact. The current Secretary of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs is coming in for a lot of entirely unjustified criticism for pointing this out. When, on a daily basis, you see the glorification and edification of alcohol in our newspapers and on television, it is hardly surprising that schemes promoted by taxpayers' money in an attempt to counter this positive publicity often fail. The community, through the education budgets of appropriation bills and particularly through the health budgets of appropriation bills, is left to pick up the tab. All honourable members know the kind of advertising that I am talking about. In particular, it is the advertising that directly links the use of alcohol with what is probably one of the more attractive pursuits for a school child: sport.

Honourable members have heard me say this before and I do not have any embarrassment in repeating it. I support Charles Perkins and his colleagues

in saying that it is a complete and utter contradiction to decry the horrific cost to the public purse in economic and social terms of alcohol abuse whilst allowing it to be vigorously promoted through association with sport. We know that alcohol is a serious problem in our schools. It is not the fact that students get drunk that is of concern, but that they get drunk often and see nothing wrong with it. As a practising Catholic, I note with considerable regret that the Papal tour is being promoted by brewing companies. It is hardly surprising that young people regard the abuse of alcohol, still the most serious drug of abuse in Australia, as being a matter of no account.

Unless opinion-makers and legislators have the courage to bite that bullet one day, we will continue to allocate greater and greater appropriations in our health, correctional services and education budgets in a belated attempt to alleviate the impact of that very expensive advertising. I hope that the allocation which will enable the extension of the services of police in schools will be a step forward in encouraging a sensible approach to the problem of the use of alcohol and other drugs by schoolchildren. I commend the government for making that appropriation.

I would also like to commend the government for its establishment of the school leaver program. I believe that one of the problems in educating children is the enormous sense of loss of self-esteem and morale that a child faces on becoming a long-term member of the unemployed. We are protected from this problem to a great degree here in the Northern Territory in comparison with other places in Australia. In major industrial cities like Newcastle, the problem is of horrific proportions because of the downturn in the steel industry and all the associated industries. Unemployment among school leavers there is in excess of 20%, and I have spoken to young people who know what it is like to be 1 of 100 school leavers turning up in response to advertisements in the Newcastle Morning Herald for 4 jobs. It is a commendable initiative of this government that the school leaver program has been established to try to provide that bridge between the end of a child's education and transition into the work force.

I want to discuss another subject which has been a perennial issue here: casino taxes and charges. I want to make one particular demand of the government and I do not think that it is unreasonable. The government has estimated an income and it is in the form of the conveniently round figure of \$1m. If any figure is likely to be rubbery, I think this one is. However, I can see that this is a drastic improvement on the truly woeful figure of \$5288 collected from the casinos in 1985-86 when the casino inspectorate cost the taxpayers \$512 000. Quite apart from the other millions that were wasted by the government on the completely unnecessary threat of public acquisition of the casinos, it cost us \$521 000 to collect \$5288. On many occasions, we have debated the \$14m that was lost in that completely useless exercise and we have debated at length the loss of gambling tax revenue since Federal Hotels was forced out of the casino business in the Territory. Federal Hotels are still operating very successfully elsewhere and I visited both casinos when I was in Tasmania for the federal ALP conference. I went deliberately to have a look at their regimes and their tax payments. They are still happily paying substantial amounts of money to the Tasmanian government and the Adelaide casino is paying \$1m a month into the Treasury of the South Australian government. Had Federal Hotels been left to its own devices here, it would have been paying around \$3m a year in gaming taxes instead of the \$5288 which the beaut new operators have been making for us.

I do not think it unreasonable to demand that the government institute a taxation regime which at least brings back the amount of money that it costs

to maintain the essential inspectorate provisions at the casinos. It is a ridiculous situation. I suggest to the government that, despite whatever massive and ridiculous subsidies it wants to extend to the casino operators, it is absurd to spend in excess of \$0.5m a year currently to collect \$5000. Obviously, I will be waiting with bated breath to see whether the government's round estimate of \$1m is realised. Certainly, the situation should have been redressed a long time ago because the \$500 000 that has been spent on maintaining the casino inspectorate is another hidden subsidy to the casino operators. They cannot operate without that essential service being provided for the protection of the public. We should at least get that money back.

The neatly rounded estimate of \$1m looks like a figure plucked out of the air. It is obvious that something is wrong with the casino taxes and charges accounting system since, in Government Gazette No S56 of 19 August, the statement of receipts for the 3 months April, May and June 1986 was \$69 760 whilst for the 9 months to 3 June 1986, which includes April, May and June, the receipts for casino taxes and charges was \$5288. Either the figures in the gazette are wrong and demonstrate a casual approach to casino taxes which will throw the 1986-87 estimate of a \$1m in round figures into doubt or the government has been paying taxes and charges back to the casino. I would like the responsible minister to advise which of these alternatives is in fact the case. It would be nice, for the first time in some years, to at least get back the money that we are spending in that additional subsidy. The Chief Minister is nodding his head, so I can assume that that will happen.

I would like to address one general issue in respect of the education budget. In his speech, the Treasurer claimed a 6.6% increase in spending by the Department of Education. Of course, this is only true if we ignore inflation. In real terms, the expenditure on education in the Northern Territory is down by 1.7%. This is in a year when, on the Treasurer's own statement, enrolments are expected to increase by 3%. According to the latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics in Bulletin No 5504, local government finance, the NT government allocated only 26% of its final recurrent expenditure to education while the average for the 6 states was 42%. Can the Minister for Education explain why the children of the Northern Territory, who already receive a lesser budget share than other Australian children, have to suffer substantial real cuts in the resources allocated to them?

Can the minister supply any evidence that Northern Territory children generally are doing so much better in their educational attainments in comparison with their southern counterparts that the small and diminished share of resources allocated to them will not adversely affect their progress? I would like to hear the minister address the fact that we have a 26% allocation of our total recurrent expenditure against the state average of 42% in that year.

Mr Manzie: Stay here and I will explain it.

Mr B. COLLINS: Despite the considerable efforts that I am making to be completely inoffensive in this debate, my words are falling on deaf ears. I am perfectly capable of reading the Hansard record. As the minister knows, I have to leave in about 5 minutes. The question is a perfectly reasonable one and there is no need for abuse about it. All I need is an answer and I may well find it perfectly acceptable.

Mr Speaker, I wish to touch briefly on a couple of other issues which I will expand on later during these sittings. I refer to the question of the

university in a general sense and Kormilda College. Mr Speaker, I have not the slightest hesitation, knowing the nature of the beast, in saying that I expect the allocation in the budget for the establishment of the university to blow out considerably. Its establishment at the old hospital site raises an old phantom. After 2 years of attempting to get an answer, I would like some final statement from the minister concerned.

A dreadful amount of vandalism occurred to public property at the old Darwin Hospital. It is an inexcusable indictment of this government that it allowed that site to be neglected and vandalised for over 3 years. In an attempt to repair some of that vandalism in the member for Port Darwin's electorate, we will have to spend far in excess of what would have been needed for those buildings to be rehabilitated. There is a reason for that which certainly is not the fault of the current Minister for Education. It would have been impossible to have done anything substantial with those buildings during that 3½ years because it would have exposed publicly, as it has finally done, the complete myth that existed in the form of the so-called Myilly Point development, the 23-floor office block, the condominiums, the hotels and so on.

After 3½ years, and 4 days after I had to track through the hospital buildings with a couple of television crews, the Minister for Education announced that the university site would be transferred once again. I began to have visions of students mounted on roller skates in order to keep up with this constantly shifting campus. It moved from University Avenue, Palmerston, to a proposal at the East Arm leprosarium, to Cavenagh Court in Cavenagh Street, to the old Darwin Primary School on which \$0.5m was spent and, finally, to the old Darwin Hospital site.

Mr Manzie interjecting.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I must say that the Minister for Education with his non-stop monologues today, instead of mere interjections, has become very tiresome indeed. The minister will have an opportunity to reply to this debate so I would ask him to cut out the monologues and say what he wants to say when he gets up.

Mr Speaker, what the announcement of the location of the university at the old Darwin Hospital finally did after 3½ years was to nail on the head the non-existent and phantom development at Myilly Point. The government was forced finally to admit very publicly that it did not exist. That brings me to the question that I have been pursuing for 18 months. Some 18 months ago, the minister concerned stood up in the Assembly and poured buckets over everyone on the opposition side for daring to suggest that a hotel would not be constructed on the Myilly Point site. He said that the only question to be resolved, and I am quoting from the Hansard as he well knows, was whether this development was to be a 400-room or a 600-room hotel and that he would be making an announcement within 6 weeks as to which one it would be.

Mr Dondas: Made in good faith.

Mr B. COLLINS: I don't doubt that. I pursued him for the following 2 sittings and finally gave it away as a bad job.

Mr Dondas: Well, don't give up yet.

Mr B. COLLINS: I have not given up. Here it is again in the appropriation debate. Could I ask the honourable minister again to explain on

what basis he made the statement that there would be a 400-room or a 600-room hotel? Mr Speaker, you will understand the relevance of this question in relation to the concern I wish to raise in respect of the university being located there. I want him to explain why he made that statement and why he was unable to consummate that deal. I suspect it was because some fairly massive injections of public money would have been required by the developers. Can he tell us why it all fell through, why we heard nothing more about it and whether it will be resurrected?

Mr Speaker, again I am attempting to make this inquiry in a reasonable way. I am trying to get a sensible answer out of the government on this because I have raised it publicly before.

Mr Manzie: Why don't you get off the stage, Bob.

Mr B. COLLINS: Why don't you lay off for just 10 minutes, Daryl, and stop being a clown.

Mr Manzie: Oh dear, look at you.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney-General will remain silent.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, could the government explain this to me? There may be a lack of funds in respect of establishing that development at Myilly Point but the 1 thing that no one in here would dispute is that it is an absolutely prime piece of real estate for a major hotel development, with the associated potential for a marina development adjacent to it in the bay and construction offering seascape views. Because of its location in the city area of Darwin, it is a prime piece of developmental real estate. I raised this publicly and totally failed to get an answer from the government. I said then, and I say it again now, that temporary things have a dreadful habit in government of becoming permanent. I know the nature of the beast of universities; they are the same all around Australia. Once they get a foot in the door, like any other institution, they grow like crazy and their demands on the public purse are absolutely unstoppable.

I believe that the permanent establishment of a university on that site would be a gross misuse of that extraordinarily valuable real estate with its potential for tourist development. I hear members opposite agreeing. That is as far as I have managed yet to pump the government into responding to this. I want to know how much it anticipates spending on the so-called temporary university on Myilly Point because there will certainly be immediate demands for associated areas to be used as recreational areas, sporting ovals and so on. I am asking the government to think beyond the end of 1 year and tell us how much it anticipates it will spend on Myilly Point and how much will be involved in shifting the university should we be able to attract the necessary development capital to use that site for the purpose for which it is best suited.

That is a totally relevant question to ask on behalf of taxpayers of the Northern Territory. How many times - and they rightly get sick of this - do taxpayers see governments throw away huge amounts of public money on areas that are later abandoned? A classic example of where the federal government has done this is with the construction of the Darwin Airport terminal. The federal government is not the only criminal in this regard. The activities of all governments and bureaucracies are peppered with this kind of problem. Structures are created that are supposed to be temporary and, 5 years later after a fortune has been spent on expanding them, the original use to which

the place was to be put is utilised. Consequently, an enormous waste of public money is involved in their moving out as a result of poor planning in the first place.

That expenditure has to be balanced against what it would have cost to establish those facilities on a site which could be used for the foreseeable future. I anticipate a time when the bulldozers will have to move into Myilly Point to knock down whatever is now being repaired and renovated - and the minister is nodding - at a cost of \$6m. It will not be \$6m; inevitably it will go beyond that. I want to know in advance what 5-year program the government has in anticipating the total amount of public money that will be spent in destroying the facilities we are now renovating and establishing on Myilly Point. If the minister does not think that that is a matter of some concern to the electorate, he should talk to some of the constituents in the electorate most affected.

Mr Speaker, I ask the honourable minister also for a statement on Kormilda College. Appropriation debates are an opportunity to ask questions relating to any appropriation of the government and this may be the earliest opportunity for him to advise the Assembly what is going on. The affair of Kormilda was a complete public fiasco, and the minister was the person whose fingers were burnt most severely. I believe it occurred because someone gave the minister very poor advice and he relied on it. The Minister for Education issued what I thought was a very cute public statement saying that the government had rejected an application from the Presbyterian Church. Despite the fact that the Presbyterian minister had been sacked, the congregation was falling apart about the church's ears and the organist had walked out, the Minister for Education was still saying, right to the death, that the changeover and transfer would occur. I suspect that happened because whoever from the Presbyterian congregation was advising the minister was telling him right up until the last trumpet sounded and the walls of Jericho fell down, that everything would be all right. It ended with ministers being sacked in Sydney and the hierarchy of the church sacked in Darwin.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like the minister to advise the Assembly of the current status of the government's plans with respect to Kormilda and whether expressions of interest will be sought by the government from the people whom it approached when this matter was raised first. If not, can he tell us what plans the government has for the further education of Aboriginal children, which was the prime purpose for which Kormilda was established and which should be the prime reason for its continuing to function?

Mr MANZIE (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, the performance of the ex-Leader of the Opposition tonight was right on form. He is a great actor. He stands up but he does not speak on any matter of great substance. He is leaving us now which is rather disappointing, but that also is part of his form. He pretends that the Assembly is very important to him. He makes a great deal of noise about that and about his belief that the Assembly does not sit long enough but, as soon as he has had his say, he disappears. He makes a habit of doing that. He will not be seen again now until tomorrow when he will come and perform for half an hour or so again. When he speaks about matters, he does not speak the full truth. He uses half truths, innuendo and rumours. He does it all in great form. As I have said, if Othello could be played by a short, round fellow, the member for Arafura would probably get a job anywhere in the country playing that part.

Before I cover matters raised by the member for Arafura, I will address some of the areas mentioned by the member for Stuart. This man is totally



amazing in terms of his lack of any understanding of fiscal matters. Let me cover his crazy little statements on housing.

According to him, the Territory government is responsible for a great downturn in housing. Not once did he mention the policies of his federal colleagues. He is a member of the Territory Branch of the Australian Labor Party. Labor Party policies have brought about the highest interest rates this country has seen. The federal government has introduced the capital gains tax and negative gearing and that has resulted in a complete cessation of private investment in housing. The policies have prevented people investing in housing and have created a great shortage in rental accommodation and building.

The high interest rates that have resulted from the federal government's policies have prohibited the average family man from purchasing his own house. There are 3 small things that have destroyed the housing industry in this country, and they are starting to rub off in the Northern Territory. The first is the Hawke Labor government's policies, the policies of the opposition's party. But, no, the member for Stuart said that it was our fault.

Mr Ede: You cannot handle it. You should resign.

Mr MANZIE: What a load of rubbish! The member should be ashamed even to mention the fact that there are problems with housing resulting from his party's policies. What a shameful attitude!

Mr Speaker, he waffled on about great losses of government money through investment in projects. This government is extremely proud of the fact that it has encouraged the Sheratons, the Yulara project and the development of casinos, because ...

Mr Ede: You didn't encourage them; you paid for them.

Mr MANZIE: That is a load of rubbish, and you know it! But that does not worry you, because ...

Mr Ede: You guaranteed the lot.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MANZIE: The member likes to talk rubbish. He believes that, if he throws enough of it around, some of it will stick but the people in the Northern Territory are not stupid.

However, as a result of those investments in the Territory, about 5800 jobs have been created directly and indirectly. To employ that number of people in the public service would cost the taxpayers \$110m a year. By this means, for the outlay of less than \$25m, direct and indirect employment has been created for 5800 people. There is a population growth of between 12 000 and 14 000 which creates demand for educational services, health services, housing, and all sorts of things.

The members of the opposition are not interested in those facts. They come up with stupid figures, completely out of context, and demonstrate their total lack of fiscal understanding. The reason why we have ongoing development in the Territory, and are able to create 7 times more jobs a year than we have young people leaving school, is because we have created an

environment where people want to invest their money and develop growth. People come here because it is progressive and because they see that we are doing something.

That fellow over there has no understanding. He talks about the ABRD funding and says that it is federal funding. For his information, actually it is money raised from a fuel excise. It does not come under the control of the federal Treasurer; it is under the control of the federal Minister for Roads. Motorists provide that money which is to be spent on roads. It has nothing to do with the greedy federal Treasurer and that is a good thing. The only reason why the ABRD is still in place is because the federal Treasurer cannot get his greasy, sticky fingers on it.

Then, he mentioned Rum Jungle and said that he hoped that the Territory government would never do that again. It had nothing to do with the Territory government. Most certainly, it would not have ended up in that terrible environmental mess if it had been under our control, Mr Speaker.

Before I turn to the subject of schools, I will cover some of the points raised by the member for Arafura. As I said before, the man is a great actor, but he does not stick to any truth or any substance. He started off with his little business of praising the government about police in schools, but then he said that it had been brought about because we had a terrible drug and alcohol problem in schools. That is not the reason why the police are there. They are there in order to create an environment of understanding between police and students, and to allow proper attitudes to develop. The drug and alcohol problem is not in the schools; it is amongst young people. Definitely students are not getting drunk at school or coming under the influence of drugs. There may be an occasional exception but those problems are far less prevalent in the schools here than in the states. However, the inference of the member for Arafura was that we have a raging problem and have put police in schools because of it. That is total garbage.

It is a great program, Mr Speaker. It creates a greater understanding between the police and students and it creates a change in attitudes amongst young people regarding police and their own behaviour. To try to link it to drugs and alcohol in schools is most demeaning to the teachers. Those problems are not there in the way that the ex-Leader of the Opposition tried to suggest.

He stated then that the states spend 46% of their budgets on education and we spend 25%. I do not know where he got those figures but they are not based on fact; they are total pie-in-the-sky. 46%! That is almost half of a state budget. If he can show me a state that spends almost half of its budget allocation on education, I will eat my hat in the middle of Smith Street Mall. That statement is total garbage!

I will go through what we spend on education and how we compare to the states because we are so far in front that it isn't funny. Despite the amazing statements from the member for Arafura, the old Darwin Hospital area has never been the site for all the development at Myilly Point. It has always been the site set aside for the last bit of development, for something that will occur in 10 years time. It has never been the site for the first development which was always intended to occur at the seaward end of Myilly Point which is, indeed, the most picturesque site in Darwin city.

This business about students hopping from one side of the town to the other is garbage. The permanent site that has been set aside for the

university is at University Avenue in Palmerston. That always has been the plan of this government which, as you know, will be around for a long time, Mr Speaker. We were treated to fabrications based on the sort of half truths and innuendo that the member for Arafura loves so much. The old hospital site is certainly the cheapest option for the development of the university. Steps will be taken soon to ensure that the university will have to move out in 10 years' time. It is a great site. It is the cheapest site for us and it will allow us to provide the educational opportunities which young Territorians are not getting now. Any suggestion by the members opposite that that should not happen is very shameful. They will all regret the attitude that they have taken towards this particular development.

In terms of education generally, I would like to begin by stating that the Northern Territory government's commitment to education is one of which we can be rightly very proud. I should point out that our achievements have been made in the face of an extremely difficult situation in the national economy. We have also had to battle against a hostile federal Labor government which has done its best to hamper our development.

Before we go into the detail of my department's program for this financial year, I would like to provide some background to the circumstances under which the program was framed. First, there was the introduction of the fringe benefits tax to be considered. That is something which the member for Stuart did not even mention. When the tax was first notified, it was estimated that the Department of Education alone would have pay nearly \$3m. That is almost \$2000 a school or close to \$100 a student. It was unbelievable. Since then, there has been so much confusion about the tax and so many changes to it that we just do not know what it will cost us or where we will be hit. The fact remains that this iniquitous tax will still have a sizeable impact on the department's budget, and that means services to our children will suffer ultimately. I cannot understand the federal government's attitude. We cannot forget that the people opposite are members of the Australian Labor Party and they are as responsible for this tax as anyone else because they will not stand up and speak against it. They keep on mumbling little stories in support of it. They say that it is aimed at the fat cats. For every fat cat in the Territory, this tax will affect 100 ordinary, hard-working Territorians.

The Territory government has had to cope with a series of broken promises by the federal Labor government in relation to education and I will give some examples. First, there was a promise to provide additional resources for programs covering English as a second language, and intensive language units. This commitment was displayed in the last federal budget when the ESL program was cut savagely by 46%. Maybe that is where the member for Arafura got his figure of 46% from. There was a 46% cut to the Territory. The program was cut by more than \$30m nationally. The Labor government does not have much of a commitment to education.

Next there was the promise that the federal Labor government would provide support to systems in schools to enable reflection on their total practices, including curriculum, teaching, learning styles and organisation, so as to improve the learning experience of all students. This support was demonstrated by the government's decision to axe completely the very valuable professional development program. With the support of the Territory government, that program had enabled every Territory teacher to receive in-service training at least once a year. It has now gone. That is how the federal government looks after education.

We also had the promise of active promotion of the teaching of community languages and bilingual education programs in schools. Terrific! This came hand-in-hand with a commitment to promote the incorporation of culturally diverse perspectives in the curriculum, organisation and practice of all schools. The federal government has backed up these undertakings by terminating the multicultural education program and chopping the ethnic schools program. It is great stuff. People can trust the Labor government with education.

The Territory has also been hit by the axing of the computer education program and reductions in funding for special education and education centres. All these cuts contravene promises made by the federal Labor government. Let us not forget that we did not receive any prior warning, not even an hour's notice.

In these circumstances, it is no small achievement that the Territory government has managed to increase funding for Territory schools by 6.6% this financial year. The member for Arafura said that, after allowing for inflation, it is actually a cut. By crikey, after almost having our heads chopped off by the federal Labor government, it is a wonder that we even managed to keep our schools open, let alone provide a 6.6% increase. The total allocation for the department's administration and schools section rose from \$146m to \$156m. However, administration has actually fallen in order to protect schools as much as possible.

Isn't it great, Mr Speaker? There is 1 member of the opposition in the Assembly. They really think that education has top priority. Federally, they cut the funding and, locally, they all leave the Assembly. They are really interested. The member for MacDonnell is still here. Great stuff! It is nice to see that at least 1 of them is interested in education. He should perhaps try to talk his colleagues into hanging around.

In drafting this education budget, our highest priority has been the welfare of Territory students. It has not been an easy task. The member for Arafura could do well to read this. In real terms, we have managed to maintain the level of direct funding to schools as well as covering increased student enrolments. We estimate that there will be an increase of 2.5% in the number of students next year, bringing our student numbers to 29 500. In recognition of this, staffing levels have been maintained. The government will spend more than \$2m to employ more than 120 new staff next year. Of these, 20 will be assistant teachers for homeland centre schools which are to be built under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Capital Grants Program. There is an additional allocation of \$275 000 to provide for 16 assistant teacher positions in homeland centres, which were funded by the federal government until June this year. This is another great example of the federal government's attitude to education: 16 teachers would have lost their jobs. The Territory government has agreed to meet this cost rather than leave those communities without a service, but there can be no thanks to the federal Labor government and its Territory colleagues.

This cut means that the Territory will not receive 1c of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' educational funding. That is disgraceful. We received only \$278 000 last year, less than most of the states, even though the Territory has almost 50% of Australia's traditionally-orientated Aboriginals. What a great job the Australian Labor Party does in government! It really looks after Aboriginals. I know this information will get around so that people will see what sort of support the Labor Party gives to the outlying areas of Australia.

Apart from capital grants, there has been no significant funding of Aboriginal education in the Territory by the federal Department of Education. We can only hope when the Department of Aboriginal Affairs education funding is transferred to the federal Department of Education, that the Territory may receive its fair share at last. I would like to know where the department's funds are actually spent. That would be interesting. The member for MacDonnell may like to find that out from his federal colleague.

Because of budgetary constraints, the Department of Education has had to ensure that the staffing formula is strictly enforced. Nevertheless, the Northern Territory is still in a reasonable position compared to the rest of Australia. Our staffing levels in primary schools are equal to the best in Australia. The levels in secondary schools are marginally the best in the country and overall we have the best staffing levels for Aboriginal schools funded from state resources.

The budget will also provide for significant capital works programs this financial year. A total of \$21.6m has been allocated for work on 17 schools, and we will spend a further \$1.8m on technical and further education facilities as well as \$1.4m on teacher housing. The federal government has allocated \$2.3m for the establishment or upgrading of 15 Aboriginal schools and the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission will provide an additional \$14.2m for capital works on further education facilities.

The capital works program will total more than \$41m this financial year. This will provide for a significant upgrading of established facilities as well as the construction of new facilities throughout the Territory. There is, for example, an allocation of \$13.5m for the new Katherine East High School. There is \$1.8m for stage 2 of Sanderson High School and a permanent school will be built at Berry Springs at a cost of more than \$1.1m. Tennant Creek Primary School will be upgraded at a cost of \$250 000. More than \$450 000 will be spent on the Driver District Centre, and there will be work done at Gapuwiyak, Milingimbi, Humpty Doo and Papunya. These are just a few of the projects that the government will undertake this year in order to keep pace with the education sector. They illustrate the commitment that has made our facilities amongst the best in Australia.

A number of new programs have been introduced by the department this financial year. These include 49 new teacher scholarships to be offered next year, a grant to Marrara Christian School to provide extra assistance for Down's Syndrome students, and a new repair and maintenance program for school computers. In fact, there has been a major increase in repairs and maintenance funding from \$5.7m last financial year to \$8.2m this year.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to make these efforts without some reductions in other areas, and the brunt of these cuts has been borne by the unskilled sections of the department. To put it bluntly, we are now running a very lean operation. If anybody is thinking of questioning the efficiency of the Department of Education, I would like him to consider that, since 1979, enrolments in schools and TAFE courses have increased by 25% whilst, in the same period, numbers of head office and administrative staff have been reduced by 20%.

The TAFE section is 1 area that has been extensively reviewed to ensure that it is as effective as possible. In some cases, we have been forced to stop TAFE institutions from offering courses which have been attracting very few students and have therefore become very uneconomical. However, this will be more than balanced by the new TAFE Open College which, through

correspondence, will offer a wider range of courses than is presently available. The Open College itself is part of the newly-formed Distance Education Branch which will also take over the Adult Migrant Education Centre, the Secondary Correspondence School and all of the department's video, audio and print production units. In addition, the new branch will take on responsibility for the Schools of the Air in Katherine and Alice Springs. The Distance Education Branch is an example of the emphasis that the Territory government has put on the delivery of services to isolated areas. It is important to note that, while we will be increasing and developing the number of services available to isolated people, we will be doing so through more effective use of our existing resources.

Although the TAFE area has been streamlined, the government has still been able to increase expenditure this financial year by nearly 3% from \$31.5m to \$32.4m. This takes the total for schools, administration and TAFE to \$188.1m, an increase of nearly 6% over last year's total of \$177.7m. This year, there is an additional allocation of \$6m for administration of the Northern Territory University College, which is an increase of \$4.6m on last year's funding. In fact, if the cost of refurbishing the old hospital site is taken into account, the total allocation for education in the Territory reaches more than \$200m. In other words, it is close to 1/6th of the total Territory budget. This is a clear demonstration of the high priority that the Territory government gives to this vital area, one of the highest in the country.

I spoke about the university during question time this morning and also earlier in this speech. However, it is worth saying again that the Leader of the Opposition cannot justify a federal government which refuses to pay tertiary allowance to disadvantaged and mature-age Territory students. Can he explain away the federal minister's refusal to pay the Abstudy allowance to any Aboriginal students who will enrol at the University College? Flinging wild accusations at the Territory government will not save him. It will confirm only one thing: that he is indeed a clone of Canberra.

Unfortunately, Aboriginal education is an issue that brings out the worst in members opposite. They seem to spend so much time whingeing about what is or what is not happening in relation to Aboriginal education that sometimes I believe their motives are based on increasing their electoral profiles rather than representing their constituents. I would like to make it quite clear to the only member sitting opposite that the Territory is leading Australia in the provision of Aboriginal education. There is no doubt that there are still problems in the area and there is no doubt that the Territory government is working to remove those problems. The issue of bilingual education is a good example. South Australia has 1 bilingual school. Western Australia has 1 bilingual school and that is run by an independent group. The Territory has 16 bilingual schools covering 12 different languages, and we are looking to expand our program next year. No education authority in the country comes even close to this performance which I believe certainly does gall the members opposite.

Members opposite were remarkably silent when I launched the Open College, which correctly addresses problems in Aboriginal communities. They did not say anything about the FEPPi 12-point plan that we adopted to improve the achievement levels of Aboriginal students. They must find it hard to cope with the fact that their federal colleagues are actually cutting funds for Aboriginal education. I think the situation highlights the fundamental difference between the Country Liberal Party and the Australian Labor Party. The difference is that the CLP is committed to representing all Territorians all the time. We do not just dance to the tune of the socialist left from

Victoria and New South Wales. The Territory government is not just moving to provide new schools and upgrade existing ...

Mr Bell: You dance to the tune of the National Party, Joh's tune.

Mr MANZIE: How about that? The only response we get from the single member of the Australian Labor Party still in the Assembly is not a derisive comment about his federal Labor colleagues who are cutting back on funding to Aboriginal education. It is some spurious mention of a man in another place.

Mr Bell: He seems to have his eyes on this one though.

Mr MANZIE: Great stuff, isn't it!

Mr Speaker, we are also looking at increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers and principals in Aboriginal schools. It is planned to expand the Remote Area Teacher Education program and to establish an annexe of Batchelor College in Alice Springs next year. I would like to point out that these plans are based on a firm commitment for funding from the federal Minister for Education and advice from the National Aboriginal Education Committee. I am concerned at recent news that the allocation of this funding has suddenly become bogged down in the NAC which does not meet again until 9 December. I am afraid that that it is typical of the federal Labor government's attitude to the Territory. Even if the federal minister honours her commitment, we are faced with an extremely difficult task of recruiting staff in time for the 1987 start.

I hope all honourable members are now aware of the high priority that the Territory government has given to education. I believe that this year's financial program, coupled with judicious use of departmental resources, will enable us to make considerable progress in our aim of providing the best possible education to all Territorians.

Mr Speaker, before I close, I would like to comment briefly on some matters that the member for Arafura raised regarding Kormilda College. Members are aware that the publicity regarding the steps that were being taken at Kormilda were brought out prematurely by a question from the member for MacDonnell, who had obviously had some information provided to him. It meant that the subject had to be brought into the open before the appropriate people were informed.

In response to the member for Arafura's allegation that we were continuing on with the Kormilda management plan with the Presbyterians until after they collapsed, I would like to point out that we were waiting for a detailed submission from the Presbyterians regarding the management of Kormilda College and that that detailed submission was not satisfactory. The rest of the Kormilda question can be addressed adequately tomorrow.

I would like to close by saying that the Territory government is committed to providing educational opportunities for all Territorians regardless of where they live or what their origins are. I commend the bill.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to make several comments in relation to the Appropriation Bill. My comments will relate to my own electorate and to the portfolio responsibilities that I bear for the opposition in this Assembly. Before I do so, I will make some general comments about the budgetary process and the economic strategy of the government.

A considerable part of the speech of the Minister for Education consisted of derogatory comments about the federal Labor government. As I have said on many occasions, far be it from me, as a member of the Territory's Legislative Assembly, to defend every action of the federal Labor government. However, it does become rather tiresome when its denigration seems to be the only arrow in the quiver of people like the Minister for Education and so many of his confreres on the frontbench of the government. I quite appreciate the difficulties that the Northern Territory government has had in explaining this budget. The moderate tones adopted by the Treasurer in introducing the budget back in August are in sad contrast to the extreme comments made by the Minister for Education and many other government ministers when it comes to considering the federal Labor government. It seems to be the only arrow in their quiver.

I really am forced to muse about the budgetary process in the Northern Territory in comparison with the fiscal maze that faces the federal government. I shake my head in wonder when speaker after speaker on the government's side can stand up and say 'aren't we doing a terrific job' and 'aren't they doing a dreadful job'. They reduce complex issues to simplistic statements that scarcely make economic sense. Mr Speaker, not for the Northern Territory government are the economic puzzles that face our federal government. The problems of revenue-raising in the Northern Territory do not represent the same task that they do in the federal sphere.

Whatever criticisms I and other opposition members may have had with respect to the inequitable application of the fringe benefits tax in northern Australia, we have had our guns spiked by this government because it refuses to look at the issue as a whole. Occasionally, we have heard a grudging admission from a government member in this Assembly that there is an element of justice in the fringe benefits tax. If company A provides an increase in salary to an employee in money terms and an employee of company B receives instead school fees for his children, the latter payment would be tax free. I do not think even members of this government would argue with the essential equity of making provision for an equitable collection of tax. Nevertheless, we continue to have this rabid campaign to which they lend themselves.

There is a step further back from that which people ignore. They ignore the tax summit of last year which was a meeting of a large number of groups within the community. Although it was very difficult to obtain any consensus about what form of reform should be made to tax system, there was no doubt about the need for reform. For ministers of this government to concentrate in such a one-eyed fashion on the fringe benefits tax does no good for this country of which, I presume, the Northern Territory is still a part. The fact of the matter is that the Treasurer and the government in the Northern Territory do not have to put up with the same sort of economic problems that the federal government has to face. The Northern Territory government does not have responsibility for foreign exchange rates. The Northern Territory government does not have to go along to the United States government when its subsidy systems look like putting Australian wheat farmers out of business. As I have said, far be it from me to be a uncritical supporter of every action of the federal government but I recognise that it is not in the best interests of the Northern Territory community that the Northern Territory government and its ministers demonstrate this extraordinarily one-eyed opposition to the actions of the federal government.

Mr Speaker, to turn to the issues that are of concern to me within my electorate, I note that there was considerable comment about initiatives in relation to Aboriginal education. Reference was made to the new primary



school at Docker River. I have a press release from the Minister for Transport and Works saying what a wonderful job the government had done and that its public works program provides for everything from a new primary school at Docker River to boat ramps on the Mary and Adelaide Rivers, so there is something worth while for all Territorians. Good old Uncle Nick has done the right thing for us.

He is providing the school at Docker River with federal government money. Although he is prepared to shout his largesse from the rooftops, not a single line in the 1½ page press release gives credit to the fact that the school at Docker River is to be provided by the Commonwealth Schools Commission. I am rather surprised that Uncle Nick, the Minister for Transport and Works, does not recall the battles royal that have raged between myself and Ministers for Education - particularly, the member for Port Darwin - about the Docker River school and what as, I recall, struck him as invidious comparisons I made between the ageing silver bullets at Docker River and the brand spanking new schools 150 miles east at Yulara. However, I want to place on record how pleased I am that Docker River school is to be upgraded to what we all hope will provide an adequate standard of facilities.

Mr Manzie: That is our money at Docker River.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the Minister for Education. I am referring to the capital works program. Page 18 of Budget Paper No 5 has the heading 'Department of Education', and I presume the minister is responsible for the Department of Education. The reference underneath the departmental heading is 'subject to funding by Commonwealth Schools Commission'. Now which of these proposed new works are in fact Commonwealth schools? He is taking it back. Mr Speaker, I have made my point. 'Game, set and match', I think is the expression.

I now turn to the subject of medical services within my electorate. I refer particularly to those at Jay Creek and Areyonga, which have been the subject of debate between myself and the Minister for Health, as well as those at Amoonguna which, for the benefit of the member for Flynn, is within his electorate so that this may be of some interest to him as well. The question of medical services is a vexed one and there is scarcely time in the context of this debate to do it justice. However, I want to make a few short comments about the Aboriginal Health Worker Training Program. It was initiated 7 or 8 years ago now. This initiative was picked up subsequently by the Department of Health and it has certainly been one of the more exciting innovations in health care in the Northern Territory. However, it would be very sad indeed if the placement of Aboriginal health workers in particular communities were to be used as a cost-cutting measure. If the increased professional responsibility to be given to health workers is something that grows naturally from their increased expertise in this area, it is something that represents a wonderful development for the Northern Territory. It represents a seizing of control by the workers over their own lives and the lives of the communities they service. However, I believe that, in respect of the communities that I have referred to here, that is not necessarily the case.

The representations that I am receiving from the 3 communities, Areyonga, Jay Creek and Amoonguna, about altered medical services and the decreased number of visits to Amoonguna and Jay Creek or, in the case of Areyonga, no longer having an expatriate health sister based in the community, are expressions of concern which cannot be ignored. I am deeply concerned because my advice is that no consultation has been carried out with respect to these changes. There is also the question of the Northern Territory government

cutting back on services. In the budget speech given to us by the Treasurer, we were given an undertaking that services would not be cut back. It concerns me that this has happened.

A further issue I will take up with the Minister for Transport and Works in the committee stage is the Impadna-Idracowra-Horseshoe Bend Road that features in the 1984-85 report as deferred but does not appear in the capital works report in the 1985-86 annual report. I draw that to the minister's attention and forewarn him that I will raise it in the committee stage.

To turn to the portfolio responsibilities that I bear for the opposition - namely, lands, housing, transport and works and central Australia - I advise the relevant ministers that I will be raising particular issues in the committee stage. In respect of housing, I raise as a query the fact that this budget reveals that the Housing Commission's appropriation has risen by 15% in real terms. The appropriation for 1985-86 has been increased for 1986-87 by 15% in the context of decreases in many other areas such as health, education and welfare. Certainly, that demands a little explanation and I will raise that in the committee stages.

I noticed in Budget Paper No 6, with respect to the economic statement delivered in August by the Treasurer, that there are some fairly surprising comments with respect to activity in the building and construction industry. In his explanation of the downturn in building activity in the Territory, the Treasurer made much of the point that building approvals per capita remained higher in the Northern Territory than elsewhere in the country. I think that that deserves closer attention in the context of this debate. The fact of the matter is that, because of the shape of the housing market and of the sparse population of the Northern Territory, per capita figures are not necessarily indicative of building activity. They do not provide a reliable measure for comparison between what is happening in the Northern Territory and what is happening elsewhere in the country. To take the example of the recently completed magistrates' court in Darwin, I do not think that I will get too many complaints from members of the government when I point out that, in the area of non-residential buildings, the building of a magistrates' court for a regional population of under 100 000 does not give a fair reflection, per capita, of building activity in Darwin vis-a-vis building activity elsewhere in the country. Equally, in the residential building area, the per capita comparison is not valid because the structure of the housing market in Darwin and in other centres in the Territory is quite different to that in other places.

I note that the Minister for Housing is conducting a seminar, presumably in response to this downturn in the building industry, particularly in the residential sector. I trust that it will be worth while and, to throw a bouquet to the government, I do appreciate the invitation to speak at that seminar. I should say parenthetically that one sometimes gets the feeling that these onrushings of the bipartisan spirit overwhelm the government when it is forced to confront a hard issue. I note with some interest that the Minister for Housing is enthusiastic about a bipartisan approach to the housing issue when he has problems, just as the Chief Minister was enthusiastic about a bipartisan approach to the proposition of statehood when it was a question of the need to explain the issue to the entire Territory population.

When the Minister for Education visits communities in my electorate or arranges for FEPI to meet in communities in my electorate, he might demonstrate a similar bipartisan spirit. Or, when the Minister for Community

Development wishes to discuss questions of community government in my electorate, he might feel a similar rush of bipartisan spirit overwhelming him. It would be curmudgeonly of me to suggest that either of those gentlemen was seeking in any way to obtain some sort of political advantage in that regard and I would be the last person to suggest such mean motivation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to turn to the Department of Transport and Works, in broad-brush terms, I think that comment has already been made by both the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition with respect to the revenue-raising measures that operate within that department. I noticed that charges for water services are likely to increase by 50% and sewerage charges by some 80%. Of course, such increases cannot escape comment from a conscientious shadow minister for transport and works. I sincerely trust that the minister will pick that up in his comments.

Land sales, leases and rents revenue is to increase from \$2.13m actual return in 1985-86 to \$2.76m estimated return in 1986-87. Motor vehicle charges are to increase by a staggering 70%. The estimated return for 1986-87 is \$9.01m against an actual return in 1985-86 of \$5.22m. A projected increase of those dimensions deserves some comment.

Announced in last year's budget with a great fanfare was a retirement village in the Alice Springs region which was described as being similar to the spectacularly successful Sun City in Phoenix, Arizona. There was an allocation of \$150 000 to establish a group to plan the retirement village. I am not quite clear which minister is responsible for that, but I recall that the member for Flynn was fulsome in his description of the virtues of that proposed development. I presume that he will be equally fulsome when he explains how and why that money has been spent, if it has been spent at all.

I see that my time is running out, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I said when I began, I will be making further comments in the committee stage in respect of specific expenditures.

Mr DONDAS (Lands): Mr Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to speak in this debate to elaborate on the size and implications of budget allocations to the Department of Transport and Works for 1986 and on my responsibilities as Minister for Lands and Ports and Fisheries.

During the committee stage, I intend to cover most of the points raised by the members of the opposition. During the passage of the Appropriate Bill last year, many pages of Hansard were taken up by debate during the committee stage. I think the former Minister for Transport and Works spent some 3 hours during the committee stage going through the points raised by the honourable members opposite. In order to be in a position to provide the necessary information during the committee stage, I will have officers of my departments investigate the questions raised in this debate this afternoon.

Before I comment on particular areas of the department's operations, it will be useful to put the functions which the Department of Transport and Works fulfills in the overall context of the government's operations. The Northern Territory Department of Transport and Works is unique in Australia. No other single department is responsible for such a wide range of operations which includes the following roles: the government's major construction agent; state road authority; provision of water and sewerage services; provision of transport policy advice; operational responsibility for the Darwin Bus Service and motor vehicle registration; and the Government Printing Office. From the Treasurer's budget speech, all members will be aware that

the method of providing water and sewerage services is being reviewed. This action has been taken to enable a more commercial approach to be taken to the supply of water and sewerage services and to make some economies through a combination with NTEC of similar utility services.

I trust all honourable members appreciate the importance of the money allocated to both transport and works for the development of the Territory. From the time of self-government in 1978, successive Country Liberal Party governments have recognised 2 of the most important tasks in securing a prosperous future for the Territory: to provide basic social infrastructure, such as schools, health clinics, libraries, water and sewerage services to attract people and investors; and to ensure that both our inter and intra state transport links are provided at standards that will encourage economic and social development. The reason why so much money has been pumped through the Department of Transport and Works since then is because it has responsibility for these important prerequisites for our future prosperity.

Honourable members can see from the budget papers that the Department of Transport and Works receives the largest allocation of all government departments. Its allocation for 1986-87 will be \$250m and that represents over 20% of total government outlays. For that reason, it is easy to see why transport and works operations are so important. The total allocation this financial year is some \$5m more than last year, an increase of approximately 2%.

In dollar terms, a 2% increase obviously means that, in real terms, the department is being asked to operate with a reduced budget. It would be a natural conclusion to think that a reduced level of service will follow from that. Through myself as minister, the government has asked the department to continue its review of methods of operation to see if further administrative economies can be achieved. If its performance in past years is any indication, we should be confident it will be able to do so.

Mr Speaker, over the past couple of years, the Department of Transport and Works has recognised the tightening financial situation and its resolve to assist the government in meeting its financial objectives has been second to none. It is not my intention to sing the department's praises too much but, in the political arena, we tend to lose sight of the good service and advice we receive from government departments.

In 1986-87, Transport and Works will inject \$198.3m directly into the economy in capital works, repairs and maintenance, purchase of capital items, property management, payments to local authorities for roads, operation of the Darwin Bus Service and the Government Printing Office, water and sewerage services and through the Road Safety Council. We will be paying \$52m in salaries and administrative support for the department's 1800 employees to provide all those services.

In his budget speech in August, the Treasurer advised the Assembly that one of the government's decisions to boost the private sector was to maintain the impetus of the capital works program. In 1986-87, we have allocated \$117.3m to Transport and Works for its part of the total works program. This is an increase of over \$2m on the 1985-86 expenditure. This government, unlike those in some of the southern states, has not reduced its commitment to maintain its capital works program. It seems a basic proposition that the economic welfare of any area of Australia cannot be protected without such a commitment.

\$59.3m of the \$117m will be spent by the Public Works Division. This allocation will enable the completion of numerous major projects and the letting of contracts for new initiatives. Some of the projects to be completed are: a pre and primary school at Moulden valued at over \$5m; a pre and primary school and community facilities at Katherine East valued at over \$18m; the upgrading of Sadadeen High School and Nightcliff High School and construction of new facilities for Casuarina Secondary College to the value of over \$1.5m; education facilities at Gumarirbang, Elliott, Borrooloola, Harts Range and Milikapiti at a cost of over \$1m; the nursing studies facilities at DIT; upgrading of water and sewerage facilities at a variety of locations, including Alice Springs, Katherine, Darwin, Borrooloola and Tennant Creek, at a value of over \$6m; and a new cell block for the police in Tennant Creek.

Some of the existing projects that the Public Works Division will commence this financial year are: stage 2 of the provision of training facilities for police, fire service and the emergency service at Berrimah at in excess of \$3.4m; the construction of the central fire station and fire service administration centre in Stuart Park; the construction of the Katherine East High school for about \$13.5m; administration, Computing and School of Extension Services, DIT, at a cost of \$7m; stage 6 of Batchelor College at over \$5m, to include a library resource centre, a distance studies building, residential accommodation and other facilities; the construction of a renal dialysis unit at the Flynn Drive Community Health Centre; and relocation of Department of Transport and Works facilities from the 2½ mile site on the Stuart Highway to Winnellie and Palmerston which will free up valuable land in what is otherwise a predominantly residential area. These are only a few highlights of this year's capital works program. No doubt honourable members will have perused Budget Paper No 5 which gives more detail of ongoing and new projects.

Members will have noted that the total value of the Transport and Works capital works program for 1986-87 is approximately \$200m which includes both works in progress and new works. The government has provided cash of over \$170m to service that program. The largest single component of the \$200m program is \$68.7m for the construction of roads. The Roads Division has been allocated over \$56m in 1986-87 to service that program and a Lands Department program of \$21.6m which is mainly for subdivisional development. It is clear from the budget papers that the allocation for capital works in roads has stayed at virtually the same level as 1985-86. Honourable members would have also noticed that it is expected that the contribution of the Commonwealth and NT governments to that \$56m is virtually the same as our relative contributions last year.

The other significant item in the roads budget is the increase in the repairs and maintenance allocation from \$18.8m to \$20.9m. It is a simple fact of life that, as the road network is extended and improved with new work, the result is an increasing appetite for repairs and maintenance funds. The government has recognised this and has increased the allocation. I am sure it will be welcomed by the travelling public and by the dedicated bunch of roadies who work in Highway House at Palmerston and at small bush camps throughout the Territory. \$6.5m will be spent on national highways, \$1.2m on urban arterials, \$4m on rural arterials and \$8m on local roads.

I would like to mention some of the major works that will occur this year. It will be obvious from the items that I have mentioned that this government is maintaining its commitment to provide improved access to areas of interest to tourists. This is essential if we are to maximise the economic benefits

that flow from tourism. Major projects commencing this year include beautification of McMillans Road between Lee Point Road and Mueller Road at \$2.5m and 43 km of the Stuart Highway at \$8.45m. The 20 km section of the Barkly Highway between the 60 km and the 80 km marks is rapidly falling apart and will be reconstructed at an estimated cost of \$3.2m. A further 7 km of the Kakadu Highway will be constructed at a cost of \$600 000. The sealed section of the Ross Highway will be extended by 10 km taking in the intersection with the Trepina Gorge access road at a cost of \$1.5m. Construction of a deviation around Bulldog Pass on the Cox Peninsula Road will eliminate one of the most dangerous sections remaining on our roads in the Northern Territory. A further section of the Port Keats Road between Pulumpa and Port Keats will be realigned and constructed to a formed gravel standard at a cost of \$400 000. The improvement of the tourist link between Roper Bar and Borroloola will take in the forming and regravelling of isolated sections between Roper Bar and the Nathan River Crossing and 8 km of formed gravel access to Central Mount Stuart will be constructed and will be of great benefit to the tourist industry at a cost of \$0.5m. Litchfield Park access from Batchelor, stage I, will cost \$0.5m and this first stage of the project, to be completed next Dry, will see the construction of a new alignment to improve 4-wheel-drive access to the top of the Tabletop Range. Reconstruction and upgrading of various sections of the Buchanan Highway near Wave Hill, valued at \$1.1m, will greatly improve the trafficability of this highway. \$1m has been set aside for the ongoing upgrading of local roads within the Shire of Litchfield and my department is in the process of handing over the program and full responsibility for this work to the Litchfield Shire Council.

Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few comments on water and sewerage. Honourable members, I am sure, will be in much the same boat as myself when confronted with the double talk of professional economists when they try to explain whether the economy is going up, down or sideways, booming, receding or in depression. I would like to suggest that there is at least one much easier measure which we all understand: the demand for water and sewerage services. The steady increase in demand we are being asked to satisfy indicates more and more people are coming either to stay or visit the Territory and more and more businesses are establishing here. They all use water and they all have the same bodily functions.

Members will notice we have works programs of over \$16m to handle this constantly rising demand. Some of the major projects are: upgrading of sewerage services in Alice Springs and the Rowe Creek bore field; upgrading of Goyder Road to Port Darwin trunks for water and sewerage; upgrading water and sewerage services to the Nightcliff, Coconut Grove, Rapid Creek and Millner areas; headworks for the Trade Development Zone; headworks to cope with the rapidly increasing demand in Katherine; and upgrading of services at Tennant Creek, Borroloola and Batchelor.

Mr Speaker, you will recall that the Treasurer announced in his budget speech that water, sewerage and electricity utilities are to be combined. The government is of the view that they each provide a service to much the same market, in roughly the same way, and that many administrative roles are being duplicated, such as billing and collection of revenue. Initial investigations indicate that savings can be made and, as a result, the government has reduced the salaries allocation to the Water Division by over \$0.5m. This does not mean any employee will lose his or her job but rather that some positions will not be filled as they become vacant and some staff may need to be redeployed within the public service.

In relation to this exercise, I would like to thank the Department of Transport and Works for the constructive way that it has approached the exercise. It is refreshing to see an organisation which does not defend the status quo for its own sake. The staff of the Water Division also deserve particular mention for the way in which they are assisting despite the fact that they may not be entirely certain what the future holds.

One of the more imaginative innovations in the Water Division in 1986-87 will be the introduction of a water utility mapping and information system more commonly known as Mapnet. This will complement the system already in use in the Department of Lands. Following a recent review of technical computing needs throughout the entire administration, it has been decided that the system selected by the Department of Transport and Works will serve as a core unit for all departments and authorities. They will be able either to tap into that facility or add to it according to individual needs. Because the system has this central role, it will now be run by NCOM rather than the Water Division.

This initiative into technical computing is evidence of the government's resolve to make use of the latest available technology in an effort to ensure government services are provided as efficiently as possible. For example, it is expected that, with this system, we will reap the benefits of computer-aided design and drafting. The costs of the initial unit of this system for the Water Division will cost in the region of \$1m. We have allocated \$400 000 towards this in the 1986-87 budget.

The government has allocated \$4.7m to the Transport Division. This is the area of the Department of Transport and Works which provides advice to the government on all transport policy. It plans and coordinates services and facilities, particularly for air and land transport. The \$4.7m it will cost in 1986-87 is a small price to ensure that we have a transport network which services the Territory and enables development to proceed.

Perhaps the most obvious aspect of the Transport Division's operation is the Darwin Bus Service. We have taken several decisions which are expected to improve the efficiency of that service. We have budgeted this financial year for something in excess of \$3m for the bus service. Dedicated school bus services provided by the Department of Education will cease from the end of this school year. From next year, children will be able to use the Darwin Bus Service. The extra passenger loads will be catered for by the extension of existing services and some feeder services in the northern suburbs will be put out to tender so that the private sector will be still involved. I hope parents will appreciate the reasons for this decision and that this is the way most urban centres ensure children get to and from school safely. It was obviously inefficient and too costly for the government to be running 2 bus services and substantial savings are expected to result from this arrangement. The Department of Transport and Works will now be responsible also for school bus services outside of the Darwin area. Once again, there are obvious savings through having 1 rather than 2 departments involved in providing bus services.

We have argued recently in the Arbitration Commission for the introduction of split shifts for drivers of the Darwin Bus Service. Commissioner Palmer has accepted our arguments and substantial operational savings will flow from that. The big benefit will come from being able to extend our services as Darwin and Palmerston grow without the need to increase the driver numbers to the same extent as would be necessary without split shifts. The TWU opposed the introduction of split shifts. However, I am confident that, in time, it

will appreciate their introduction. I understand similar arrangements are very popular with drivers in most Australian cities.

It may be of interest that, while the level of subsidy required for the Darwin Bus Service has been increasing in dollar terms over the last few years, we have been able to turn that around this year. The estimated subsidy is down from \$3.264m to \$3.215m. In real terms, this is a much more significant result than it appears in straight dollar terms. In fact, the operating cost per bus kilometre has been reducing steadily in real terms from \$1.51 in 1981-82 to \$1.43 in 1985-86.

Another new initiative in the transport area that I would like to mention is the METAL program which stands for Motorcycle Education, Training and Licensing and its purpose is obvious. This is an attempt to stop the incredible waste of life which we see every year from motorcycle accidents. The aim, of course, is to educate riders in good road habits and skills. It will cost \$154 000 in 1986-87 to set up and administer. I hope that there would not be 1 member in this Assembly who would not support our efforts in that area.

One of the most significant items in the the Department of Transport and Works budget for 1986-87 is the increase in funding for repairs and maintenance. The allocation has increased by \$6.3m from \$31.5m in 1985-86 to \$37.7m. There are general increases in all areas of the department's operations: public works to maintain government buildings and other assets - up from \$10.7m to \$14.5m; maintenance of the water and sewerage system - up from \$2m to \$2.4m; and maintenance of the roads system - up from \$18.8m to \$20.9m.

The gradual decay of the nation's public assets is a problem for all governments. In Australia, as in other countries, allocations to repairs and maintenance since World War 2 have not been sufficient to retain assets in good repair. The cynics amongst us would say that that is because politicians can't cut a ribbon over a newly-repaired pothole whereas they can receive public recognition for opening a new project, whether it be a road, bridge, school, health centre or recreational facility. This government recognises the need to maintain properly the hundreds of millions of dollars worth of public assets that have been provided since self-government in 1978. The increased allocations for repairs and maintenance are proof of that.

Mr Speaker, the final area of the Transport and Works budget that I would like to comment on is its revenue-raising operation and the charges which the government has set for services. All members will be aware that, prior to the end of the 1985-86 financial year, the government took separate decisions to increase water and sewerage charges, bus fares on the Darwin Bus Service and charges for motor vehicle registrations and other services such as drivers' licences. I think it is important for members of this Assembly and the public to understand why. The government derives no joy from having to increase charges. However, our financial situation is such that it is impossible to continue subsidising these services at past levels. It is, of course, government policy that, where possible, the user of a service provided by government should bear the cost of that service. It is also our view and the view of the Commonwealth Grants Commission that we must move towards levels of charges that are comparable to those in the states. The increased charges will move us in the right direction to satisfy these policies.

Revenue from water and sewerage services is estimated at \$20m in 1986-87, up from \$12m last year. We are changing the water charging system to one



based on usage rather than having a basic rate plus excess. The new charges align more closely with those in other states and will contribute towards covering the cost of the services. I have no doubt that, during the committee stage, I will have to home in on that one with some further information for honourable members opposite even though it is quite clear that water charges in the Northern Territory are not the most expensive in the nation.

Revenue from the operations of the Motor Vehicle Registry is estimated to rise from \$5.2m to \$9m. Once again, the new charges will be aligned more closely with those in the states. I note the comments of the member for MacDonnell and I will reply to those in more detail during the committee stage.

The Darwin Bus Service estimates that, with the new bus fares, revenue will increase by over \$250 000 this year to \$1.53m. This will enable us to reduce slightly the level of subsidy to keep the service going. Without the extra revenue, the subsidy would have risen from \$3.2m in 1985-86 to \$3.5m.

Another area of my responsibility is the Department of Ports and Fisheries. The government has reaffirmed its commitment to a major program to develop the full potential of the fishing industry. Funding for the Department of Ports and Fisheries in 1986-87 includes \$242 000 for a major new program directed at fish marketing and new product development and \$256 000 for a major new program directed at fostering the development of a commercial aquaculture industry in the Northern Territory.

The 2 principal elements in the fish marketing and new product development program comprise \$127 000 for the establishment and operation of a market information centre and new market research development, and \$115 000 to establish product handling and product quality guidelines as the basis to enhancing the potential return to the Northern Territory industry. As a developing industry, budget funding allocated to aquaculture is \$106 000 for a service and development system for the industry, \$115 000 for supportive and strategic applied programs and \$35 000 for the appointment of a senior aquaculture development officer. Ongoing programs to foster ship repair and marine services industries will continue. An additional \$41 000 is provided in the budget to enable the department to continue the monitoring of the Mary River as part of the ongoing Barramundi Management Plan.

The Darwin Port Authority has 2 main capital works projects. The first is the Frances Bay Mooring Basin, which is a \$6.5m project designed to provide cyclone-protected lay-up facilities for the fishing industry. It is nearing completion and should be ready for occupancy in December 1986. Expenditure on this project to date is \$5.4m. Current bookings for berths total 98, comprising 48 fishing vessels, 10 commercial vessels and 40 pleasure vessels. Berth priority is allocated to commercial fishing vessels with pleasure vessels occupying the balance until they are required by the fishing industry.

The Stokes Hill Wharf rehabilitation project was initiated by the Port Authority to extend the under-deck steelwork for the life of the wharf for a further period of 10 years at its original design capacity. Works are nearing completion. The total project cost is \$750 000.

Honourable members may be surprised at the low profile adopted by the Department of Lands in this budget, particularly given the department's major role in urban development. The reason is simple. Since self-government, the Territory government has been working towards providing sufficient quantities of residential, commercial and industrial land to meet the needs of all our

developing centres. We have reached the stage now where our immediate land needs are being met, for the most part, through projects commenced over past years.

Honourable members will note that new and ongoing projects in the capital works program total some \$21.6m. Apart from \$6m dedicated to the development of facilities for the new University College, the bulk of this money is being spent in the major development areas of Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs. These projects, and those in the minor centres, will ensure that we maintain a comfortable level of land availability throughout the Territory. The level of funding made available to my department this year will allow it to continue to meet its land management and development responsibilities. We are continuing to monitor the marketplace so that we can predict and plan to meet future land needs.

Whilst we have what are probably the most efficient planning and building controls in Australia, we will be able to continue our long-standing practice of review and further streamlining wherever practicable. Development of our electronic mapping and land information systems, MAPNET and LIS, will continue, thus keeping us in the forefront of this work in Australia. In short, this budget will allow the Department of Lands to meet the targets set for it by government this year.

Mr Speaker, as I said earlier, I propose to answer any questions raised by members opposite in the committee stage. I commend the bill.

Mr HANRAHAN (Tourism): Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory is entering a new era in its history, an era of development and consolidation which will lead us into statehood and our rightful place in the community of Australian states. We are indeed fortunate to be here during this time of historic transition and to be able to contribute to the growing strength of our region. In my opinion, the economy of the Territory is going from strength to strength. That strength is enterprise-based and it is occurring in the face of incredible odds. Despite some ridiculous federal government policies, we are still managing to survive.

Honourable members are aware that Australia's balance of trade is continuing to move in a negative direction. However, members will also be aware of Territory initiatives to insulate our region from the malaise firmly entrenched in much of the rest of Australia. We are moving forward, and I of the strongest catalysts providing that renewed impetus in the Territory is tourism. Our tourist industry is growing rapidly, and outstripping the rates being achieved by the states. There is no mystery about why this industry is developing so effectively. It is based on professionalism in promotion, marketing and service - the essential components of any successful enterprise.

The Northern Territory government's commitment to tourism was amply demonstrated in the recent budget handed down by my colleague the Treasurer. The \$12m allocation for tourism represented an increase of \$1.1m. This should be seen in the context of the national appropriation for the Australian Tourist Commission of \$29m, an increase of just \$2.9m this year.

Tourism should not be regarded in isolation. Its impact is identifiable across the whole spectrum of the community. Tourism creates jobs, generates income and stimulates the construction, service and retail industries. In a region such as the Territory, tourism impacts on almost all of us to varying extents. The benefits of a sound and vital tourist industry also flow to, and indeed are supported by, other government departments such as Youth, Sport,

Recreation and Ethnic Affairs, the Conservation Commission, the Department of Education and the Department of Transport and Works. Tourism is destined to become the Territory's largest revenue earner and, by the end of this decade, has the capacity to achieve that milestone figure of 1 million tourists per year. By that time, the industry will be employing directly some 10 000 Territorians.

There are few areas in this budget which do not relate in some way to tourism. For example, with the final sealing of the Stuart Highway from South Australia in just a few months' time, there will be a dramatic increase in the number of private motorists and coaches coming into the Territory. We confidently expect that that increased traffic will make it appropriate that \$36m has been allocated for new road projects out of a total of \$56m being spent on road improvements generally. This will provide greatly improved access, comfort and, of course, safety for the motorist and coach passengers.

Furthermore, there are spin-offs for the tourist industry in various aspects of the budget as it relates to the Conservation Commission. The Northern Territory is often described as the world's last frontier and it is therefore appropriate that present and future works undertaken by the Conservation Commission be beneficial to the tourist industry. Some brief examples include the sealing of the roads and carparks at the Cutta Cutta Caves Nature Park and at Katherine Gorge, the expansion of visitor facilities at the Arltunga Historical Reserve and the provision of camping and picnic facilities at Finke Gorge.

However, it is in the area of tourist promotion and associated activities generated by the Tourist Commission that the biggest benefits will be felt. At the recent Australian Tourist Industry Awards in Adelaide, our Tourist Commission gained the national recognition it deserved as this country's finest state or territory tourism authority. The commission achieved this high status among its peers and within the Australian international travel communities because, above all else, it is professional. None of the benefits from the range of programs I have outlined materialised without professional marketing, promotion and cooperation with neighbouring states.

With the Crocodile Dundee promotion, for instance, the commission worked hand in hand with the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation and with QANTAS during the launch of the movie in north America. We intend to repeat this successful exercise during Crocodile Dundee's launch in Europe and other places.

I have already mentioned the sealing of the south road. However, without proper promotion of the highway's completion, the benefits to the Territory could be lost. To this end, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission is involved in a joint venture with its South Australian counterpart. The commission is funding tourist information centres at Tennant Creek and Katherine and will soon begin a national advertising campaign focusing on the south road's completion.

I cannot end this part of my address without stressing the importance of Aboriginal involvement in our tourist industry. While the commission's role is generally one of advice on tourism matters for Aboriginal people, it is involved also with the funding of an awareness video program which shows what tourism is and how Aboriginal communities, organisations and groups can become involved.

It is evident that the benefits which flow to the Territory's tourist industry come not just from the funding provided by this government to the commission, but from many other areas within the framework of the budget. This budget reinforces the government's commitment to tourism. That commitment, evidenced by the Treasurer's increased allocation to the commission this year, must be applauded. It provides financial stimulus to an industry which is proving to be the Territory's lifeblood.

In my portfolio of Business, Technology and Communication, there has been important progress with the Trade Development Zone. The Australian Industries Assistance Commission has produced a draft report which flies in the face of the Prime Minister's widely publicised initiatives to resurrect Australia's export manufacturing sector. It is quite amazing to me that the IAC, at this most critical time for Australia's economy, is actively proposing what can only be described as disincentives to this country's export-orientated resurgence. The draft report recommends against special assistance to trade development zones. This is an illogical action when both the Prime Minister and his Industry Minister, Senator Button, have supported the concept of trade development zones. There is no place for negativism in relation to such a vital Northern Territory government initiative as the TDZ. While the IAC draft report is a sad indictment of that body's capacity to grasp reality and is naturally of concern to this government, I must assure honourable members that the government's commitment to the zone is as firm as it ever was. There will be no retreat from the stand we took more than a year ago with the support of this Assembly: to ensure that Australia's first Trade Development Zone not only worked, but became a model manufacturing base.

The potential of the Trade Development Zone, in terms of job and wealth creation, is enormous and cannot be understated. I invite all members to inspect progress at the zone and to become fully acquainted with what this export manufacturing base will mean for the future of the Northern Territory. The recent budget allocation of \$5.6m for capital works, together with additional funding of \$770 000 subsequently approved, will cover completion of the 4 warehouses in the administration building, currently under construction, and an additional warehouse at a cost of \$650 000.

As a result of an intensive ongoing marketing program, 14 manufacturers from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore have been signed to invest and establish in the zone. In addition to the marketing thrust into South-east Asia, the authority has initiated a program to attract import-orientated Australian companies to invest in the zone. Seminars have been held in Sydney and Melbourne and a selective advertising campaign will lead to heightened awareness of the zone among Australian companies. The authority is continuing to target appropriate manufacturers as well as making contact through various industry bodies.

The Trade Development Zone Authority is a major element in the government's interdepartmental trade and marketing strategy. Its network of consultants and subconsultants in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand can be used by other Territory government agencies such as the Trade and Marketing Services Bureau, now Nortrade, and the Departments of Mines and Energy, Ports and Fisheries etc to facilitate local contacts. The authority's consultants are instrumental in arranging visits to Darwin by groups of potential investors who, might I remind honourable members, travel to the Territory at their own expense.

While I am discussing the Trade Development Zone, I would add that recent comments and allegations that have been made about the activities of the zone

and the employment of its consultants are baseless. I await the presentation of the facts to the contrary. Speaking as one who has travelled overseas to participate in seminars, to view at first hand and to operate with our consultants in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore, I can give only the highest praise for their ability to promote the Territory and their pride, not only in the Territory, but the products that they are promoting.

I wish now to turn to the activities of my Department of Business, Technology and Communications and highlight the government's initiatives in its 3 main areas of operation. As members will be aware, recently the government announced its intention to place a new emphasis on industry development and the marketing of Territory products and services. In order to achieve this goal, my department has responsibility now for the development, promotion, marketing and diversification of secondary and tertiary industry, commerce and small business. The government is moving quickly to establish a new division, the prime objective of which will be to focus on industrial and commercial development. Once established that division will work with the other industry-related departments as well as the Trade and Marketing Services Bureau in promoting the expansion and diversification of the Territory's industrial base, particularly through the encouragement of local, interstate and overseas interest in Territory products and services. Specifically, the division will work to establish a liaison network with industry, the Business Consultative Council, to ensure that communication between industry and government is effective and reflected in government policy and direction. The new division will be working also to encourage investment in viable secondary and tertiary industries, particularly those with export potential.

A further important initiative will be the review of legislation to ensure that any provisions impeding business efficiency are identified and recommendations made on the elimination of unnecessary constraints. In the area of employment and training, the department undertakes extensive liaison with industry, as well as the Commonwealth government, on appropriate labour market programs in the Territory. These areas include the Australian Traineeship System, apprenticeships and the Community Employment Program. The new Industry and Employment Training Act provides for the establishment of an advisory council to advise and make recommendations to me on matters concerning training for industry and employment. Included are training and trade apprenticeships together with the assessment of present and future requirements of industry for skilled and semi-skilled labour. The membership of this council is tripartite, including representation from government, employee and employer organisations. The council has power to establish specific-purpose committees which will provide government with a wide range of representative opinions ensuring training for industry employment is realistic and responsive to industry needs. The council has met on 2 occasions and has considered a wide range of issues.

Members will be aware also that the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments have formed a joint secretariat to assist in the establishment, development and delivery of traineeships. The Australian Traineeship System is a new form of vocational training which complements apprenticeships in the non-trade areas of industry. The Territory government is pleased to support this initiative, and looks forward to the expansion of traineeships as the concept gains momentum.

The policy functions of communications and technology have been integrated successfully allowing these vital activities to develop in tandem with the new direction for the department. Technology and communications are key areas of development within the Territory, and the department's thrust will be to

identify and encourage the use of appropriate technology, and provide advice on options to government industry and commerce. In line with this direction is the development of a strategy for a comprehensive communications network for the government, business and industry, linking all areas of the Territory.

Particular activities identified for communications development include: investigation of a private, government communications network; the examination of opportunities for the government to use communications to provide remote area services, and introduce new services; and exploration of opportunities to develop new communications-based industries in the Northern Territory. Also, the department will pursue the role of technology in assisting the efficiency and competitiveness of industry and business as well as opportunities for development of new technology-based industries for the Territory.

Having had the opportunity to highlight the functions of my Department of Business, Technology and Communications, I am sure members will agree that this department is adopting a dynamic role in these extremely important areas. All of the functions and activities I have outlined directly reflect the government's desire to build a sound industrial and economic base for the Territory.

I can only assume from the comments of members opposite that the budgetary allocations and efficient operation of the Department of Business, Technology and Communications, the Trade Development Zone and the Tourist Commission make them very happy with the operations and the success of the government, as I am.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I would like to address my first comments in this budget debate to the intricacies of the English language and the way in which it is used. This is the third time that I can recall a Treasurer introducing in this Assembly what he has called a 'balanced budget'. I know the member for Stuart touched upon the use of the language in connection with balanced budgets and perhaps the previous Treasurer could explain some of these meanings to me. I am prepared to be taught; I am prepared to learn anything in this Assembly but the way in which the term 'balanced budget' has been used for the last 3 years escapes me. Over the years, the government has made much of the claim that it operates a balanced budget.

In his 1985-86 budget speech, the then Treasurer, the member for Fannie Bay, said: 'Once again, the Territory has managed to balance the books'. Again, this year, the Treasurer said: 'As a first decision, we rejected the temptation to take the soft option and go into deficit budgeting for the first time in the Territory's history'. That is all very laudable, but how have these so-called balanced budgets been achieved? They have been achieved by the simple expedient of borrowing money.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics produces a comprehensive document entitled 'State and Local Government Finance Australia'. In that document, the Australian Statistician analyses all state financial transactions and presents them in a directly comparable way. An example of these official statistics, comparing the NT debt position in relation to that of Australia generally, is most revealing. In 1979-80, the interest paid by all states amounted to \$2294m or \$157 per capita. In the Territory, the comparable interest payments were \$13.6m or \$117 per Territorian. In 1979-80, the average Australian contributed \$157 per annum to repayment of his state's debt and the average Territorian paid \$117. We were some \$40 per capita in the black compared to the rest of Australia then. However, by 1984-85, the interest per capita for all states had risen to \$363 per head of population

throughout Australia. However, for the Territory, it had galloped well ahead to \$507 for every Territorian.

In the space of 6 short years, the Territory's financial managers have taken us from a position of paying \$40 less than the average in interest payments per capita to a position of paying \$144 above the average. What this means is that, in 1984-85, the average person throughout Australia was repaying government debts and loans at the rate of \$363 a year. The average Territorian is paying \$507 per man, woman and child in the Northern Territory. In terms of indebtedness, our position has declined remarkably compared with the rest of Australia. Indeed, if we look at this year's budget papers, we will see that Territorians will be repaying \$536 per head of population. Members opposite can rise and apologise for their policies and extravagance. They can do what they like but these are Bureau of Statistics figures. Their so-called balanced budgets have reduced us to repaying far more for debt than any other Australians. That is the result of these so-called balanced budgets.

The same rapid escalation in our debt position is shown in relation to borrowings. In 1979-80, net government borrowings per Territorian were \$268. However, by 1984-85, this had rocketed to \$534. That is borrowings incurred in the 1 year for every man, woman and child in the Territory. By comparison, the average borrowings per person in all states was \$257. We were borrowing more in the Territory! The government talks about the federal government's deficit. We were borrowing twice as much per head of population in the Northern Territory as any other state government. No wonder the government has been able to balance the books. Any mug can balance the books as long as he keeps on taking out loans. You just keep taking out another loan to pay off the loans you already have. The members opposite are a collection of dummies who would not know how to run a book out at the racecourse. What a collection of dummies!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I think that the member for Nhulunbuy is coming close to using unparliamentary language and I ask him to withdraw that remark.

Mr LEO: I withdraw it, Mr Speaker.

The government has simply borrowed more and more money to pay for its debts. That is the balanced account that we have in the Northern Territory. So much for the balanced budgets which the member for Fannie Bay has claimed we have. Let him get up and deny it. Balanced budgets!

Mr Perron: I have spoken. Can I have another go?

Mr LEO: You can have another go. I will give you all the time you like.

By 1984-85, the interest payments of \$71.7m, and they are included in here, were only just exceeded by the new borrowings of \$75.3m. That is a simple equation. We have locked ourselves into a debt situation and we have to keep borrowing all the time just to cover it. It amounts to \$536 per man, woman and child in the Northern Territory. That is the balanced budget that the government touts every year in this Assembly.

There are some questions that I want the Treasurer to answer in his reply. I would ask him whether he accepts the validity of the Bureau of Statistics figures or whether he disputes them. Can he provide this Assembly with a consolidated statement showing the level of government indebtedness for the last 3 years, including all government agencies and instrumentalities, and can

he give us similar figures showing all interest paid and all borrowings made? In other words, if the Treasurer disagrees with the figures that I have put forward to the Assembly this evening, I want him to be able to provide me with alternative figures. Given the very high and growing level of public debt shown by the ABS figures, can the Treasurer give an assurance that he will not continue to bail out the budget with further borrowings? That is, are we going to keep painting ourselves into a corner with more and more debt? Does the Treasurer have any limit in mind concerning the extent to which he will load Territorians with a debt burden? It is \$536 this year. Where are we going to end up? Where is the final benchmark on government borrowings? When do we stop spending ourselves into a corner? Finally, I am dying to hear some explanation by the Treasurer of the difference between borrowing money to balance the budget and a deficit budget. The Treasurer may be able to explain that simple concept to me. As I have said before, I am an extremely humble person and I am even prepared to be taught by yokels.

I turn now to the financing of local and community governments. They are obliged to have their budgets assessed before the end of September. However, they have no access to any funding until we pass this budget. That is a matter of great concern to local governments although, as I understand it, there remains a degree of flexibility within community governments. I would suggest that the government looks at the legislation and the requirements that it forces upon local governments but is not prepared to accept itself. This budget has been around since August whereas local governments are obliged to have theirs formulated before the end of September. I would ask the government to review that matter and I would hope that, within its budget planning, it can foreshadow to local governments their likely revenue in terms of Territory contributions so that they can better formulate their budgets.

Another matter within the Department of Community Development is the welfare area. It was of great concern to me, given the amount of public attention that the matter has received, particularly in central Australia, that there was no allocation for the construction of some facility for the criminally insane. The judiciary in central Australia has no option, because of these persons' medical condition, but to put them back out on the street where they will commit yet another crime and so appear in court again. It is an endless, mindless circle and I had hoped that there would be some allocation so that such persons could be securely and humanely detained. Unfortunately, there was no allocation for that in the budget.

In relation to the racing and gaming portfolio, I have only 1 query. I am sure the former Treasurer, who has some interest in racing matters, will appreciate my concern. I raise this matter now so that the minister has some forewarning when we come to the committee stages. I notice that the actual revenue for the Northern Territory government from the TAB last year was about \$300 000. The estimate for 1986-7 is \$1.3m. I would not claim to be a mathematician, but that looks like about a 400% increase. While I do expect that the TAB will continue to enjoy some success, that seems to me to be a wildly exaggerated figure. I can only imagine that either the amount is wildly exaggerated or the government intends to impose some new tax or otherwise increase its revenue-raising capacity within the TAB. If the government does intend to do that, it would be of great concern to me and, I am sure, to the racing industry within the Northern Territory generally.

Turning to more parochial matters, once again Nhulunbuy had the peculiar distinction of not enjoying a mention in the Treasurer's budget speech. I have become quite used to this. It is a place that is far from the minds of the majority of government members but, nevertheless, it is a considerable



community within the Northern Territory and it contributes substantially to the Northern Territory's income. In fact, I would say that, per head of population, it contributes more than any other community within the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, we did not rate a mention in the Treasurer's budget speech and, after having a look through the capital works program, I can understand why because we did not rate a mention there either.

I had hoped that we could have at least achieved the sealing of a link road within the community, a road known as Beagle Circuit. It is a matter that I pressed the government about for a number of years. Unfortunately, it did not see fit to include that in the capital works program. I commend the government for continuing to allocate funds for the access road into Nhulunbuy from various Aboriginal communities. There was a crazy notion some years ago that there would be a 2-lane bitumen highway running into Nhulunbuy. Of course, that was insanity then and it is insanity now. Aboriginal people, however, desire better roads. They are sick to death of having to pay enormous fees for charter aircraft to fly basic essential goods into their communities. I commend the government for taking a far more conciliatory approach to these access roads into and out of Nhulunbuy and continuing to fund them.

Apparently, the Department of Health is funding a health works program in Darwin. Amongst my constituents, there are a number of Aboriginal people. Obviously, those people have no access to the Casuarina shopfront facility that is provided to persons living in Darwin. Those persons do not see the delightful advertisement that is played regularly upon commercial television. As far as they are concerned, the entire program of health works is an absolute waste of time. However, taking a look through the medical and hospitalisation statistics, I would presume that Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory generally would constitute about 50% of the hospitalised population. Therefore, I am left with the conclusion that the health works program is not about trying to improve the health of that sector of the community but is simply jingoism and political grandstanding. The expenditure of money on that program does not affect the majority of hospitalised persons within my electorate and I suppose it does not affect one way or the other the majority of hospitalised persons throughout the Northern Territory. It is a front and a stupid piece of political grandstanding. With those words, I will leave it to the government ministers.

Mr STEELE (Elsey): Mr Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the Treasurer's budget speech and it is now quite some time since it was delivered. In preparing his first budget, the Treasurer found himself in a fairly tough situation given the national economic perspective at the time and the poor economic control exercised by our federal government, resulting in heavily increased foreign borrowings, the collapse of the Australian dollar on the international scene and the general downturn of the economy. This has placed the Territory and, for that matter, the whole of Australia in a very adverse fiscal situation indeed.

Despite this and despite the external constraints placed on Territorians by the actions of the Commonwealth Treasurer, spending in the Northern Territory budget will be maintained in the Katherine region to the benefit of the Territory work force. Significant capital works items such as the Katherine East High School at \$13.5m, the new power-station at \$27m and the Housing Commission program of 190 accommodation units are all major items which complement expenditure by the federal government on the development of the Tindal RAAF base project.

The Tindal project has been described as the largest capital works item in the Commonwealth. An estimated \$210m will be spent to develop the base, the headquarters for the FA18 aircraft due to arrive in October 1988. At the end of October this year, contracts worth \$125m had been let. In 1984-85, \$4m was expended on the project. In 1985-86, this figure was \$34m. Currently, spending is around \$300 000 per day or approximately \$7m per month. Total expenditure to date is around \$70m. Over 800 employees are involved working either for contractors or for the Department of Housing and Construction.

Significant progress has been made with the establishment of most of the basic services. Works completed to date include the Department of Housing and Construction site office, roads and engineering services to the technical support side and the administration area, security fencing, the construction of the first 21 RAAF houses at Katherine East, the 17.34 km Stuart Highway deviation, the main base access road and the married quarters subdivision. All available local subcontractors have been employed by main contractors where practical. However, the market has reached saturation point and labour is now being brought in from Darwin. Largely, construction workers are accommodated in a construction camp being operated by the Master Builders Association and local firms, and now the Department of Housing and Construction is building a further camp. This important infrastructure is needed for what is the largest air base in the world. The geographical area of Tindal is some 122 km<sup>2</sup>.

Tenders have been let for construction at Katherine East and on the base. Complementary sporting facilities will be established including playing fields, gymnasium and swimming pool. While this development is taking place, Katherine is receiving the benefit of support development by the private sector, including caravan parks and other tourist-related infrastructure. However, destructive taxation policies have inhibited much-needed capital development in the private accommodation areas. High interest rates and increasing Commonwealth bureaucratic interference have prevented many of our entrepreneurs from generating prosperity and employment. Quite a number of capable productive business operators have stopped investment in job-producing areas.

The Treasurer has referred to the opening of a youth centre in Katherine. Funding for this has been identified in the Department of Community Development and accommodation is being assessed. There is a desperate need for this facility in Katherine and it is starting to become overdue.

In 1986-87, the Northern Territory government will support the establishment of St Joseph's Primary School with a subsidy of interest against borrowings in the order of some \$500 000. Much of the preliminary clearing work has been undertaken at the new school site at the corner of Maluka Road. Contracts have been let for the access road and car park, for the ring mains and fire hydrant and for landscaping and a play area. Tenders closed on 10 October 1986 for the contract to construct the school building and the Northern Territory will provide 2 demountables. Katherine builders won the contract at \$329 000. The establishment grant is yet to be finalised but some help will be needed to cover up the enormous boulders all over the playing field area.

In this financial year, the Conservation Commission will complete much-needed works at Katherine Gorge with the sealing of the access road and car park. Sewerage reticulation will also commence. Improvements will be made at Cutta Cutta Caves and Mataranka National Park, and construction of the ranger administration centre at Timber Creek will commence. Timber Creek is

at the western end of the Gregory National Park and this government's commitment has ensured the development of the park. Unfortunately, however, the integrity of the area is scarred by the location of some 15 000 cattle at Humbert River. Accelerated development of this park is urgently needed to cater for the rapidly developing safari visitor market. In fact, the whole region through the Kimberleys is becoming a very important visitation area.

The Conservation Commission has a very sound reputation. The development of Northern Territory parks has been carried out efficiently over a long period of time. The time has now come for further development of the Katherine River - not just for the tourists but for the improvement of the quality of life for our local Katherine residents. The Low-level Reserve at Katherine needs to be upgraded as soon as possible. Clearing, landscaping and paving is absolutely essential to cater for the increasing numbers of locals now visiting and using the reserve.

The Treasurer said that there is no longer scope for budget funds to be used to underwrite private developments other than through the provision of government services and infrastructure. I ask the government not to write off the Katherine Meatworks. I understand that a very keen offer to resurrect the works ready for the 1987 killing season is under consideration. A very tiny injection by government is needed to open this works and I call on the government to provide the support required. The employment advantages alone would be well worth the investment.

In tourism, the government has recognised the need to market our attractions with the introduction of a \$1.4m advertising campaign. In addition, the private sector is moving to promote the outback Australia product during our Northern Territory summer in competition with other Australian summer attractions. One group in the Darwin, Katherine, Kakadu region will invest \$170 000 in television advertising alone in our southern capitals to promote return trips of 8 days duration for \$800 just to keep some industry momentum going and fill vacant rooms during our summer.

Taking into account the national need for restraint, our budget is a pleasing balance of capital works provision and general encouragement of economic progress along with the continuance of government services overall. Again, I congratulate our Treasurer on his first budget which does offer some hope for Territorians. I commend the budget.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I would like to concentrate firstly on matters relating to my electorate. The Treasurer stated that the Lake Evella school will be upgraded to the tune of about \$1m. That is very pleasing to note because, since I have been the member for the area, I have had numerous representations from that community in respect of the number of students who attend that school.

It is also pleasing to note that there is to be a library resource facility in Milingimbi. Such a facility has been lacking for some time and I was very pleased to hear that announced by the Treasurer in his budget speech. There will also be an upgrading of stage 1 of the primary school at Roper River and I was very pleased to hear that.

In respect of the NT housing budget, it was pleasing to note that the Northern Territory Housing Commission will build a number of houses in my electorate. I believe that about 13 houses will be built this financial year at Roper River. However, Roper River is a very small community compared to Galiwinku and I thought that the community at Elcho Island would have received more housing than the community at Roper River.

It was pleasing to note that the Department of Education had taken into account the need to upgrade school shelters in my electorate. I believe the former Minister for Education pushed this matter with the department and the government, and I commend him for his efforts. I assure the minister that people in my electorate appreciate that because, as we often hear in this Assembly, education is crucial to the development of young Territorians.

Turning to health, I am pleased that the government has decided at last to upgrade psychiatric services in the Northern Territory to the tune of about \$1.2m. That is a pleasing tune to hear, Mr Speaker. The opposition has pursued that matter for the 3 years that I have been in the Assembly. I understand that other opposition members took it up with responsible ministers before that time. Also, Alice Springs is to receive a renal dialysis unit during this financial year. This will allow Territorians to be treated in Alice Springs and they will not need to go to Adelaide for that specialist service. It is good to see this indication that at last the Northern Territory government is starting to take into account the interests of Territorians.

No indication was given of an allocation for expenditure for the Menzies School of Health Research. However, new laboratories are to be provided in the very near future. I visited the Menzies School of Health Research a couple of weeks ago and Professor John Matthews took me on a guided tour. The institute is doing a fantastic job and it needs all the support it can get from the Northern Territory government for the research it is undertaking. I believe that the school has been trying to have a unit established in Alice Springs for some time. I am disappointed that the Northern Territory government has not allocated any funds in this financial year to enable that to happen because, if the school is to achieve results through its research into diseases that occur in the Territory as a result of climatic factors or whatever, I believe that a unit should be established in Alice Springs. Mr Speaker, I am sure that you would be pleased if that should occur and would see it as a step in the right direction for the Menzies School of Health Research.

I turn to my shadow portfolio for conservation. The Treasurer did not mention conservation when he outlined the government's priorities for the 1986-87 budget. This is rather disappointing. We hear this government crying out persistently for funds from the federal government for parks like Kakadu and Uluru. I was disappointed that the Treasurer did not even mention conservation in his budget speech. I hope that the Minister for Conservation will explain to us how, if the Territory is looking forward to controlling areas like Uluru and Kakadu in the very near future on our march to statehood, the Treasurer, who has the responsibility of allocating finance to the departments, forgot those enormous responsibilities that the Northern Territory government should provide for.

In relation to the Treasurer's speech, I would like to mention specifically a number of organisations and social clubs in the Top End and Alice Springs, especially those in Darwin and Palmerston, that have been established over the last few years. In no way do I mean to denigrate the services offered through the Department of Community Development in servicing youth worker programs, the resource centres in Darwin, the Tracy Village Sports and Social Club, which received a \$150 000 grant for the development of an indoor dressage arena, or the equestrian centre in Palmerston and certain other facilities in Tennant Creek. However, I would like to draw attention to the number of Aboriginal organisations within my electorate and throughout the Northern Territory that lack similar facilities. Earlier, we heard the

Minister for Community Development say that there are people in these communities who are going mad because they have no social facilities and no organisations to give advice to them. There are young students who sniff petrol and terrorise the communities, go to jail and come out again only to repeat the same pattern.

I am really disappointed that better facilities have not been provided for these communities. Angurugu is a classic example. Kids from the age of about 4, 5, 6 to about 20 years sniff petrol and yet there are no facilities to combat this problem. Whether that is the responsibility of the land trust or the Angurugu Community Government Council or the Department of Community Development, I honestly urge the Northern Territory government to take into account the interests of our young people everywhere, not only those in the major centres.

Recently, I wrote to the Minister for Community Development concerning services for marriage counselling and youth problems at Alyangula which is a totally European community on Groote Eylandt. I have not received any response to that letter as yet. However, leaving that aside, Mr Speaker, I urge the Northern Territory government to consider the submissions that it receives from such communities. They do not have adequate funds to run the sort of programs that the major centres have. These communities are seeking funds from the Northern Territory government, through the Department of Community Development, to establish activities to keep the children occupied after school. I have found this to be one of the most disturbing features since I have been travelling around areas such as Angurugu, Umbakumba and Lake Evella. There is insufficient government support for community groups seeking to provide activities for children after school hours. I hope sincerely that the Northern Territory will take my comments on board.

Mr Speaker, I will be taking up further issues in relation to my shadow portfolios in the committee stage.

Mr McCARTHY (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, as the Northern Territory moves down the path towards statehood, it will need a sound and stable economy to power its drive towards becoming the seventh state of the Commonwealth. A vital ingredient of the mix that will keep the engine of statehood running smoothly will be the product of our primary industries. Primary production, largely through the cattle industry, traditionally has been the economic backbone of the Territory. Even though our oldest industry is no longer our greatest money earner, it is still critical to the Territory's financial future. The government recognised that fact when it took the initiative of appointing Gunn Rural Management to undertake a broad-ranging study of the Territory pastoral industry. Like the rest of our primary industries, the pastoral industry will be a critical long-term contributor to our economy and the Territory's chances of eventually assuming its rightful place as an equal partner in the Commonwealth. The Gunn study will provide a draft industry plan for raising the level of pastoral productivity in initiatives which both the industry and the government might take over the next 10 years.

The GRM study of the pastoral industry typifies the way in which the Department of Primary Production is becoming involved increasingly with industry in formulating departmental directions as well as the efficient allocation of resources. To this end, 4 industry advisory bodies have been established consisting of both public and private sector representatives. The committees are: Field Crops, Horticulture, Northern Cattle and Buffalo, and the Southern Regional Pastoral Committee. These committees cover the spectrum of primary production in the Territory. This financial year, the government

has committed \$32m to ensure that our primary industries flourish in spite of the harsh economic landscape against which the Territory budget has been framed. Although it cannot ignore the bleak financial monument being sculptured by the Labor government in Canberra, the Territory intends to maintain the economic momentum which has made it the exception in a country beset by financial hardship.

The bovine brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication campaign will receive \$16.2m or approximately half of the DPP budget. The BTEC program is essential, not only to the future of the cattle industry but to that of the Territory. The program has a target date of 1992 for eradication of brucellosis and tuberculosis in cattle and tuberculosis in buffalo. Currently, the BTEC operation in north-west Arnhem Land is the centrepiece of the program. It is planned to destock the area by turning off as many as 12 000 head per year over the next 3 years, to overcome the high prevalence of disease in that area.

Despite the efforts of the government to keep primary production moving along with the rest of the Territory economy, there is 1 factor over which we, like the man on the land, have no control. I am speaking of the vagaries of the weather and Mother Nature. Drought has hit the pastoral industry severely over the past couple of seasons. Nearly \$750 000 has been set aside under the Drought Assistance Program to aid the pastoral and agricultural areas as a result of the recent lack of rainfall in many areas of the Territory.

Our bicentennial program 'Droving Australia', which undoubtedly will be remembered as one of the major contributions to the 1988 celebrations, will receive \$523 000 to ensure its success. This project will be funded by the Territory government and private sector sponsorship, with limited funding from the Bicentennial Authority. The project is designed to focus national and international attention on the lives, times and achievements of Australia's pioneer drovers.

It is also worth noting that a number of new initiatives are being undertaken by the department to help broaden the primary production base. Water drilling and investigations on Deep Well Station have been allocated \$67 000 this year. As I mentioned this morning, that is for the date program. Deep Well is seen as a potential site for the development of commercial date growing. We hope that can be expanded to its full potential over the next few years. Deep Well was selected as a likely site for this project on the basis of a preliminary soil and water information study, but detailed water investigations are necessary to prove whether adequate water exists to support a commercial date operation in the area. In a further bid to get a date industry off the ground in the Territory, mature date palms will be removed from the Alice Springs sewage ponds to the Arid Zone Research Institute outside town. I saw that happening when I was last in Alice Springs and it looks as though it will be a successful operation. The best of those date palms will be used for future research trials.

The department has also been allocated \$35 000 to enable the Territory to make a gift of 25 buffalo to Timor to overcome the depletion of stock suffered in that part of the world. While that is not of any particularly great benefit to the Northern Territory primary production industry, it is a sign that we are prepared, even in times of hardship, to help others.

Horticulture is the exciting growth area in the NT rural industry. While it was difficult to obtain the services of a senior horticulturist following the transfer of senior horticulturist Terry Piggot to ADMA, recent

advertisements in both Britain and New Zealand have brought a good response and I expect to have a senior horticulturist in the Territory in the very near future.

I would like to refute a statement made by the member for Koolpinyah that the Department of Primary Production appears to have lost direction and is somehow not doing the job that it is charged with fulfilling. Discussions that I have had with officers of primary industry departments in other states indicate that our officers are held in very high regard and that our research work is at the forefront of research nationally. However, I do not deny that more could be done if money were available. All departments suffered funding cuts this year. The Department of Primary Production is no exception. It is difficult to accommodate all the needs. However, under my direction, the department will continue to provide good support to the industry it serves.

The member for Koolpinyah indicated that there had been a blowout in the administration area as opposed to other services, and that is simply not true. If the member bothered to read the full list of budget papers before us, she would recognise that there are quite clear explanations for apparent blowouts in both salary payments and administrative and operational expenses. I might add that salary payments are across the board. They are for all those people who are undertaking research in extension services in the field. These are the people that are working at the front door, helping people on the land. The increase in salary payments only reflects the normal increase flowing from the national wage case right across the board. There has been an increase and it is reflected there.

In line with other departments, we are reducing the number of employees and will have achieved our target in the very near future. I believe we are as far advanced as any other department in doing that. It is ludicrous to say that that has blown out by some unusual means. We are down in capital items, but so is almost everybody else. Often, capital items are reflected 1 year and, the next year, there appears to be a dramatic cut. It only means that the infrastructure required is in place and no more is required. Of course, there are things the department would like to have that it cannot have. Hopefully, it will be possible to get them next year.

The other services relate mainly to the BTEC program. \$16.4m of the \$17.1m is for the BTEC program. That is a separate fund and is not subject to normal allocations of funding to the Department of Primary Production. Cuts in all areas are representative of funding cuts across the total allocation, and research and extension services have suffered no more, and in some cases less, than administration. This year, the Department of Primary Production has gone to program budgeting which will give a very clear indication of what we are spending in all areas, and we will be able to judge the effectiveness of our programs from program budgeting.

There will always be knockers and there will always be those who will pick up the tune and play it to others, but the achievements of the Department of Primary Production and ADMA will continue to sing louder. ADMA has been handed responsibility for a number of areas that were managed previously by the NTDC. I refer to BTEC, type D loans, drought relief, and development loans associated with the industry, among others. These loans and assistance measures are flowing to industry following a delay in the full handover of responsibility for this function. ADMA's marketing of produce is aggressive and achieving good results.

I turn now to the Conservation Commission. In keeping with the government policy of withdrawing from direct involvement in underwriting private sector-type activities, the commission has divested itself of the forestry operation on Melville Island. The handover of the operation to the Tiwi people of the island gives them the opportunity to manage a project with the potential to become a multi-million dollar money spinner for them.

Closer to home, Litchfield Park is one of the jewels in the Conservation Commission's crown, and it is an area to which the commission will be paying a considerable amount of attention in the coming year. Broad-scale and detailed planning and development has commenced on the park already, as well as on stage 1 of the development of Wangi Falls. This planning and development will complement the completion of road access to the falls along the western boundary of the park. \$170 000 is to be spent on design and development of visitor facilities this year. Work is almost complete on access roads from the northern and eastern sides of the park. The Wangi Falls access road is expected to be completed by the end of the next month, weather allowing. Soon a permanent ranger will be based in the park following the completion of accommodation on the northern boundary which is currently under construction. That is very close to completion and the ranger, who is currently working out of Berry Springs, will be able to be based at that point. Hopefully, next year, we will be able to establish another ranger there because, with the continued use of the park and the new roads that are being built, we will have to get it under control.

Howard Springs is another area undergoing a facelift. It is to be drained and considerable work is to be done on deepening the hole, putting in new sluice gates, fixing up the children's wading pools and so on. \$90 000 will be spent on that. It is the first time since World War 2 that the pool has been drained.

The other popular family swimming spot outside Darwin, Berry Springs, will have \$75 000 spent this year on employment of additional staff. The new zoo at Berry Springs is not progressing as fast as we would like it to because of the problem of obtaining sufficient funding. However, it is progressing very well with the goodwill and hard work of the people out there who look after the animals. They are actually building the facility. The nocturnal house is almost complete. The aviary is under construction as are the walks through the forest areas. They hope to have a boardwalk around the lagoon going before too long. Roads are being built. Animals are being bred in the new breeding areas and food for animals is being bred as well. That is progressing very well and it is well worth a visit.

Closer to Darwin, a fair amount of money is being spent on Holmes Jungle. Part of it is federal government funding, but quite a large amount is being provided by the Northern Territory government. Improvements are also being made in our new area of operations in the Petermann district. The establishment in the Petermann district will cost \$455 000. Personnel previously involved in the running of Uluru National Park are now operating in the Petermann district using Yulara as a base. The operation will continue to provide visitor services within the resort, as well as maintaining contact with pastoralist and Aboriginal groups in the district with regard to wildlife management, feral animal control and fire management. While I am on the topic of fire management, \$50 000 will be spent on fire management in the Vernon district this year.

Development will also continue at Kings Canyon. Additional rangers will be employed in this magnificent heritage area at a cost of \$40 000 this year,



and 5 Aboriginal community rangers have been employed on a 15-month training program since September this year.

The member for Arnhem and shadow minister for conservation indicated that there was nothing in the Treasurer's speech in relation to conservation, but there was plenty of information available to him. I am sure that, if he were interested, he would have read that and seen that a considerable amount is being done. With the passage at the August sittings of enabling legislation, a permanent local management committee will be established to assist in the park handling process. As mentioned by the member for Elsey, the Gregory National Park development is progressing and water has been connected to the Wilson Street subdivision in Timber Creek which will allow for the Conservation Commission to provide housing there for rangers. It is intended to place rangers in the Gregory National Park as soon as possible. That park needs to be controlled; it is a magnificent park. It will be one of our major parks and we are working towards its control.

There is ongoing investigation and negotiation in relation to future parks in the Dulcie Range area and in the area of ranges west of Tennant Creek. The commission is also in the process of establishing a commission presence at both Borroloola and Nhulunbuy in an effort to meet the long-term demands at those centres.

The commission expects Territory crocodile farms to begin processing animals soon in strict accordance with our plan of management. That plan of management was unanimously endorsed recently in Quito, Ecuador, by the Crocodile Management Group, a group that in the past has been a little reluctant to agree with our plans for crocodiles in the Northern Territory. However, it has endorsed that plan of management wholeheartedly and we hope to have that in place before long. That plan involves Harry Messel. Activities on the farms will be monitored carefully by the commission.

Cane toad research will be another important function of the commission this year. Members are probably aware that cane toads are progressing across from Queensland at a great rate of knots and, over the last couple of years, we have funded research into biological means of controlling cane toads in conjunction with the Queensland, Western Australian and federal governments. The federal government was a little reluctant to provide assistance this year, but I understand that funding is now flowing. The Territory is working in conjunction with Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia on that matter. The program focuses on cane toad demography and pathology and is being conducted at the James Cook University in north Queensland.

Mr Speaker, having outlined the approach of this government on matters concerning primary production and conservation, and bearing in mind restrictions placed upon us by these tight financial times, I am sure that you will agree that the budget is a balanced document for development. We are seeking a sound financial base, not only for today's generation of Territorians but for those to follow. It can only be hoped that the rest of Australia will realise the worth of our policies, the surety of our direction and, for the sake of Territorians present and future, grant us the type of constitutional recognition to which we are justly entitled. This budget is proof positive that we are heading in the right direction to warrant having that equality bestowed upon us, and I commend the Treasurer's first budget to honourable members.

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the budget. Before concentrating on my areas of responsibility, I would like to make some

remarks in relation to comments that have been made by members of the opposition who appear to have deserted us.

The member for Arnhem commented on the allocation of funds to the Housing Commission. He supported that move wholeheartedly, and so he should because the housing program this year accounts for an estimated cash expenditure of \$11.2m. This represents an increase of more than \$6m on last year's expenditure. He said that more money should have been spent on housing at Galiwinku. I would say to the honourable member that the various programs, under the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement, are looked at on a needs basis. It is quite obvious that the committees that are established to examine the various housing programs were of the opinion that the need did not exist at Galiwinku at this time.

I was very pleased to hear that the member for Arnhem supports the Menzies School of Health Research. He acknowledged the good work that it is doing and I look forward to his support when we try to gain further assistance from the Commonwealth. I have tried to have the Menzies School of Health Research acknowledged as the unit that will examine all aspects of Aboriginal health in particular. I believe that it is ideally positioned to carry out research into the use of kava and a number of other matters. We hope to establish a unit in Alice Springs but I am unable to comment on that until it is a little bit further down the line.

He mentioned Angurugu and a lack of government support for the provision of various activities for children after school hours. I would like to say that the problem of petrol sniffing is being examined at present. South Australia intends to develop programs which will help children overcome their boredom but, as far as the Territory is concerned, we believe that the communities themselves hold the answers. The member for Arnhem would acknowledge that there are Aboriginal communities that do not have the problem because the traditional Aboriginals in those particular communities are able to control their people. However, we acknowledge that the problem is serious in some communities and we will keep him informed. As the Minister for Community Development mentioned earlier today, there will be a meeting on 28 November of ministers responsible for Aboriginal affairs, community development and health to examine the problem of petrol sniffing.

The member for Stuart raised the matter of health workers and alleged that there had been a reduction in services. In line with the Northern Territory government's policy to promote Aboriginal self-management, the Department of Health encourages Aboriginal management and health care. Where the Department of Health and the communities agree that a satisfactory level of service can be provided solely by Aboriginal health workers, then such arrangements are implemented. The most recent examples are in the towns that he has mentioned. In such circumstances, the Aboriginal health workers are supported by regular visits by nursing and medical staff, by radio and telephone communication with medical staff, which is available on a 24-hour basis, and the provision of vehicles equipped with radios. Again, these arrangements are monitored very carefully to ensure that a service is provided. However, it is government policy that, where possible, Aboriginals should manage these things for themselves.

He raised the matter of the seminar on housing and I am very pleased that he welcomes such a seminar. This is not really the result of the downturn in the housing industry. There have been many comments from a wide range of bodies involved in housing: the Master Builders Association, the NT Real Estate Institute and various suppliers and contractors who wanted to have some

input into the housing policy. I look forward to his comments on that occasion. There will also be a seminar in Alice Springs on 6 December.

I would like to refer to some comments made by the member for Stuart because, once again, he appears to be out of touch with his electorate. He raised the matter of the sealing of the airstrip at Yuendumu and said that it was taking priority over other things. It is a pity that the member for Stuart did not speak to the people at Yuendumu because my understanding is that the airstrip there was sealed at the request of the community itself. Before the sealing, the airport could not be used after even very light rainfall. In fact, no medical evacuations were possible from that community if rain fell in the area. For that reason, the community gave high priority to the sealing of the airstrip.

He also spoke about the water supply. Again, he should look at the history of this matter, particularly the situation pertaining at Yuendumu in 1976 or 1977. I understand that, in those days, Yuendumu relied on a makeshift water supply which was very unreliable. On many occasions, the tanks were empty and water restrictions were the order of the day. I think it was through representations from you, Mr Speaker, to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs at the time that funds were made available for the drilling of extra bores and the installation of pipes at that particular community. It was through your efforts that they were able to obtain a reliable water supply. It appears that the member for Stuart wants it both ways. First of all, the community did not have any water and, now that it has plenty of water, he is moaning and groaning about taps leaking. I acknowledge that there are health problems at Yuendumu that result from leaking taps and water lying in puddles but those problems can be addressed by the community itself.

Despite economic stringencies and severe cutbacks in Commonwealth funding, by careful housekeeping initiatives and the encouragement of investment by private enterprise, we will maintain the high standards required to meet the needs of Territorians in housing and health. This government regards housing as a major contributor to the growth of the economy. It is directly contributing \$49.5m which represents a 40% increase on last year's figure. \$31.7m is provided in a combination of grant and loan money under the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement and \$88m comes from internally-generated funds.

Capital works expenditure remains at a similar level to last year with this year's program allowing for the construction of 633 new dwellings throughout the Territory. This will provide welcome opportunities for local construction companies. The availability of serviced land is sufficient for the government to complete its construction program in the various Territory centres. Tindal is proceeding as planned. The increase in the Housing Commission's building program this year is part of its strategy to provide the housing required to support Katherine's economic expansion. This year's program provides for the construction of 160 homes in Katherine, an increase of 64 on the 1985-86 program. The provision for repairs and maintenance has been increased by 15% to meet costs associated with expected increases in materials, contract charges and the larger base of dwellings requiring maintenance. It takes into account also the increase in maintenance required on homes built immediately after Cyclone Tracy.

Home ownership continues to be a major government objective for 1986-87 and one in which the private sector plays an important role. This year's budget provides \$20m for the Territory's Home Purchase Scheme. I have mentioned already the amount of money that is being provided for Aboriginal

housing - some \$11.2m, an increase of \$6m on last year's expenditure. Thus, the government is working to meet the housing needs of all Territorians.

That same dedication and commitment is applied to the health of the community. Health care is and always will be a most expensive part of the government's overall budget. As our population grows, its health needs expand. Meeting those needs requires not only compassion, but careful strategy and initiative to make the wisest and most beneficial use of every available dollar. This year, direct expenditure by the Department of Health represents \$900 for each man, woman and child in the Northern Territory. This does not include expenditure on behalf of the Department of Health by the Department of Transport and Works in areas such as construction and maintenance. However, Commonwealth funding cuts and the introduction of the fringe benefits tax have not allowed the government flexibility to mount all the health initiatives that it would have liked.

Despite this, by the reorganisation of priorities and the exercise of considerable financial restraint, the Department of Health will implement a number of new initiatives and strengthen existing priority programs. The government's policy is to provide the best possible health service for all Territorians but it faces 2 immediate constraints: the imposition of further cutbacks in funding by the Commonwealth government and the rapidly increasing cost of maintaining the health system.

The Department of Health allocates more than 60% of its budget for salaries and ongoing costs. Members will be aware that a wide range of health professionals is seeking a wage increase, the most significant group being the nurses. If the nurses' career structure and work value claim were to be settled in the Territory as it was in New South Wales, the cost would amount to approximately \$4m each year. We are developing our nurse career structure and we are working together with the Australian Nurses Federation in relation to that structure.

The Chief Minister has announced already a reduction in public service staff of 400 in 1986-87. In less essential health areas, staffing restrictions have already been applied and the department is actively pursuing a policy of reducing health delivery costs to a minimum. At the same time, the Department of Health is encouraging private medical services, a move which reduces the strain on the public purse while allowing Territorians a choice of private and public medicine.

A major development in this area is the proposed private hospital to be built in the grounds of the Royal Darwin Hospital. More than 80 expressions of interest were received from all parts of Australia for the design, construction and operation of our proposed private hospital. Eight of those companies made formal submissions and I hope to announce the successful contractor in the near future. I am confident that the 100-bed hospital or thereabouts will be operational early in 1988.

The CT scanner at Royal Darwin Hospital has been the subject of publicity for some time due to repeated malfunctioning. A Brisbane-based group of radiologists was selected to install, operate and maintain a new, full body, state-of-the-art CT scanner at the hospital. Initiatives of this kind are essential to the continuation of an effective health service in this era of high technology. However, this is not to deny the very exciting and positive initiatives undertaken by the government.

A separate allocation of \$1.2m has allowed for the establishment of a much-needed community psychiatric service centre at Tamarind House in Darwin, together with an upgrading of existing psychiatric facilities at Alice Springs. Our Director of Psychiatric Services, Dr Joan Ridley, has surveyed the areas of need and the first stage of the Tamarind development will include a psychiatric rehabilitation community service, forensic psychiatric service, a child and family guidance service and an administration centre for the Territory's psychiatric services. Being community based, the psychiatric service will provide professional expertise whilst drawing on the skills of specific volunteer groups many of whom are supported by the government grants-in-aid scheme.

Alice Springs will have a purpose-built dialysis unit at a cost of \$380 000 with \$80 000 allocated for the equipment. I am very pleased to note that the member for Arnhem has acknowledged that. \$35 800 is allocated to the government's ongoing control program in relation to salt-marsh mosquitoes. Using the larvicide BTI, breeding areas are sprayed from a helicopter during early breeding periods following high tides in the late dry season. The larvicide does not affect humans, animals, fish or other insects and the Territory spraying program has earned recognition and praise throughout Australia.

The National Disease Control Program and the Home and Community Care Program, which are cost shared with the federal government, are worthy of notice since they provide a valuable community service in terms of disease recognition and home assistance to the frail, aged and disabled.

In the budget, \$90 000 has been allocated to the Health Promotion Unit whose publicity campaign on the importance of good nutrition, the dangers of smoking and the value of immunisation have had an immense public impact. I was very interested in comments by the member for Nhulunbuy because, obviously, he is not aware of the various programs that have been developed through schools and by the various health workers in the communities to teach Aboriginals the importance of good nutrition and provide information on dangers to health. I acknowledge that Nhulunbuy and some other areas do not have access to local television. Nevertheless, that does not mean that people in Darwin should be denied access to such programs. It is important that we try to advertise wherever possible and promote health. If we can extend the programs to Nhulunbuy, we will do so. I think the member for Nhulunbuy should make himself aware of what is happening in a number of the communities in his area.

The Northern Territory Acoustics Laboratory will be established early in 1987 to screen infants and young children. The estimated cost is \$83 000. Construction of a new 32-bed ward at Katherine Hospital is expected to be completed by February 1987. It will have 20 paediatric beds and 12 adult beds. Detailed planning is also under way for increased health facilities to meet new developments at Tindal and these will be announced in next year's budget.

In the 1986-87 budget, more than \$500 000 has been allocated for health programs associated with AIDS. This is subject to a cost-sharing arrangement with the Commonwealth government. As the world struggles to combat this fearful disease, in the Territory we can take some pride in the claim of a Finnish authority who visited Australia and has said that only in Western Australia and the Territory was AIDS being tackled effectively.

In March this year, the Health Practitioners and Allied Professionals Registration Act came into effect, making the Territory the first place in the world to legally recognise Aboriginal health workers. Ten registration boards were established and these will cost approximately \$40 000 to service in 1986-87.

In 1987, the basic nursing education program will be transferred from a hospital-based setting to the Darwin Institute of Technology. The Department of Health will offer up to 15 scholarships to encourage students to enrol in this course. In its 1986 budget, the Commonwealth announced that the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Scheme, IPTAAS, would end on 31 December 1986. From 1 January 1987, the Territory will be responsible for this assistance. It will receive Commonwealth funding of \$1.235m for the second half of 1986-87. Funding will continue after 30 June 1987 and will be indexed in future years. The new Territory scheme is geared to the specific needs of Territorians and will be far more flexible than the scheme administered by the Commonwealth. Members would be aware of past delays in obtaining assistance under the IPTAAS program, and this aspect will improve markedly.

The Aboriginal Pharmacopeia is an exciting project which is part of Australia's bicentennial program. It is funded jointly with the Commonwealth, and almost \$200 000 has been allocated towards it in this budget. Another \$50 000 has been allocated to the St John Council as a special grant for the provision of ambulance and clinic transport for pensioners.

A total of almost \$8m, an 11% increase on 1985-86, has been set aside for grants-in-aid to community organisations. New initiatives include: assistance to the Bindi Centre in Alice Springs to open a second residential cottage for intellectually-disabled adolescents and adults; sponsorship through the Down's Syndrome Association of the visit of Mr Rex Brinkworth, Director of the National Centre for Down's Syndrome in England; and assistance to the old timers in Alice Springs to furnish and equip their day-care centre for aged and disabled people.

As the initiatives described in this speech show, health care is a major concern of the Northern Territory government. By careful management, we will continue to bring the best possible health service to all Territorians. I commend the budget.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, it has been a long time since the budget was brought down and, in the Alice Springs area, there are not many visible signs of large projects. The bridge in the farm area is progressing. That was really an item from last year's budget, as was the bed-level causeway across the golf course. Both will be very welcome when completed and will add to the infrastructure of the town. However, I think it is worth while to go briefly through some of the projects in this budget which may be not quite so visible as those in previous years, when we have seen building like the community college and so on.

The Alice Springs High School has received \$150 000 to air-condition its recreation hall. Having taught at that school for about 8 of my 10 years in Alice Springs, I know just how cold it can be in winter and how dreadfully hot in summer. I am sure that expenditure will make a considerable difference in the recreation and physical education program at the school. Acacia Hill Special School is to receive \$140 000 for additional facilities, and the Centre for Appropriate Technology at the Community College of Central Australia is to receive \$350 000 for student accommodation. That centre does a great job and has spin-offs for people in Aboriginal settlements in central

Australia and, no doubt, throughout much of the rest of the Territory. It certainly has developed some very interesting and useful items.

The renal dialysis unit has been mentioned before. The \$380 000 to be spent on its provision will be welcomed by those people who have had to travel to Adelaide for treatment and, as time goes by, there will no doubt be many more of those.

In the roads program, another 21 km of the Stuart Highway north of Alice Springs will be upgraded to 2-lane standard, and there will also be works on the Ross Highway. I am pleased also to note that my representations to have a road into Central Mount Stuart from the Stuart Highway have resulted in the allocation of \$0.5m. That mountain is of interest to many Australian people and I am sure that the number of visitors to it will increase and that it will add to the tourist attractions of central Australia.

I am pleased to note that works will be carried out at Roe Creek which is the bore field for the Alice Springs water supply. The collection and bulk transmission systems will be upgraded at a cost of \$2.7m. Another \$13.3m will be spent on the No 9 generator at the power-station. I must go out there to see whether it will be a diesel and gas or a gas turbine. I rather hope it is a gas turbine because they are very efficient machines. The need for increased power generation in Alice Springs is significant. Last summer, we came very close to the maximum load on a number of occasions and this will give us a little breathing space. Another \$9.5m has been allocated for generator repairs and machinery overhaul.

In Alice Springs, the Housing Commission will provide 10 1-bedroom units, 170 3-bedroom units, 15 4-bedroom units and 40 2-bedroom units. I commend the commission for its work in Alice Springs. I believe that the waiting time for housing is possibly as low as it has been during my 6½ years in this Assembly. It is also providing housing in almost all the central Australian communities. That expenditure is capital intensive and provides work for many people.

I am pleased to note that \$40 000 has been allocated for the extension of the police program in the high schools, and that \$1.4m is to be spent on upgrading the Alice Springs High School. The Sadadeen Secondary College is being upgraded as well and, having had a very close look at it with the minister, it is clear that that certainly needed to happen. We will now have a facility which will be worthy of its rather high-sounding name.

I am also pleased to note that \$67 000 is to be spent at Deep Well to help establish a program which could lead to the establishment of a date industry. It will be a long-term project because, unlike grape vines, date palms tend to take many years before they yield in economic quantities. In the meantime, water, maintenance and weed control all have to be carried out on a continuing basis.

Alice Springs is really humming along at the moment. It has been going very well and much of that is due to the faith of the private sector investing in our town. It is seen as a place of great potential and people are putting their money where their mouths are. The development is fantastic. I trust that those who have the faith to put their money into the town to add to our prosperity will obtain the rewards that they deeply deserve. It is great to see that the government has created a positive environment to encourage this. I would like to finish on that particular note. The private sector is really doing great things in Alice Springs.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, it was refreshing to hear the Minister for Education talking about some of the government's positive initiatives. The Appropriation Bill aims to reduce some areas of government expenditure and redirect others to reduce wasteful employment and to encourage investment. The minister's checklist contained many positive initiatives and, in view of the barbs coming from members opposite, it is interesting to compare them with some of the items in the current federal budget.

Some of the grants to organisations in this year's federal budget include: \$8000 to the Food Preservers Union for leadlight and ceramic classes; \$114 000 to the Victorian Trades and Labor Council Hall for in-residence and arts workshops, and \$25 000 for the compilation of a catalogue relating to arts and working life; \$15 000 to the Geelong Trades Hall for the production of a play; \$15 000 to the Storemen and Packers Union for a project on art - presumably a hammer and sickle and a sledgehammer; \$35 000 to the Union of Australian Women to research its own history; \$5000 to the National Network of Young Lesbians and Homosexual Men; and \$5000 to the Sydney Gay Mardi Gras Association for an art worker plus fees for pre-festival workshops, with a further \$7500 in May.

Those are some of the small items. There are some much larger ones of course. \$100 000 is being granted to a group to study the stress resulting from completing household chores. This is a 5-year study, costing \$100 000. It goes on and on. \$650 000 was spent on space at the Rockefeller Centre in New York, space which was never ever required. Of course, locally, we have \$1.5m for a control tower at Gove airport which the federal government knows will never be used.

That is not a bad scenario, given the problems which face Australia at the moment. We have one of the worst balance of payments deficits of any country in the world and we have inflation roaring out of control. It is interesting to note that to pay off our foreign debt completely at the moment would require \$6000 from every man, woman and child in Australia or, alternatively, \$25 000 from each Australian family. With that scenario in place, it is hard to understand the opposition crying about the revenue-raising that the Northern Territory government is engaging in at the moment. As a government, we are very proud to be able to say that we intend to raise 23% of the amount of money that will be spent within the Northern Territory in this next fiscal period. Before 1978, when we moved to self-determination, we were totally reliant on federal government handouts and we have moved now into a position of contributing 23% of the revenue for our budget. It is nearly half of the relative amount that is being collected in the states.

We have some very interesting and innovative schemes in the Northern Territory at the moment which are being funded from our budget. Moneys are being set aside for assistance to enterprise workshops and small business training. The concept of providing facilities for and supporting private enterprise is strong and alive in our current government. We are moving faster and faster to provide infrastructural development to allow our private businesses to create further wealth and employ more people.

The technology section of the new Department of Business, Technology and Communications is steaming ahead at the moment and, of course, we all know what is happening with the Trade Development Zone proposals. We hope that these will continue to move forward as quickly as they have in the past. In relation to communications, infrastructure is being examined to provide rural and remote area people with communications arrangements that will carry them through to the 21st century. I think members will hear some very interesting things about this in the near future.



On the technology side, NCOM has received additional moneys to upgrade the Territory computer services. Combined with some of the proposals that we are examining in respect of delivering communications services by satellite, it will give us the opportunity to provide one of the most innovative government schemes in Australia. This is being examined by several departments at the moment and is called the one-stop-shop scheme. This concept was raised some time ago in the report of the Select Committee on Communications Technology and has been expanded further into areas that produce slightly different cost savings and additional services to the major centres and, inevitably, to the rural and remote areas as well. That one-stop-shop principle relates to information that is currently available within government both for government servants and for private enterprise. Instead of having to track around various government buildings and offices to transact business or to obtain information, a person will have access to a one-stop-shop centre in each of the major towns or major community centres. Eventually, wherever we have a government service of any sort, whether it be a police station in a remote area or some transport and works mobile camps, a person will be able to access information even from those sources.

At the moment, if people wish to pay their water rates, they go to the Water Division. If they wish to pay their electricity bills, they go to NTEC. If they wish to obtain information on land matters, or births, deaths and marriages, they go the appropriate department. For matters relating to motor vehicles, they go the Motor Vehicle Registry. That may not be difficult for people in Darwin or Alice Springs but it is not hard to imagine how difficult it is for people who live in areas remote from those major centre. People in the scrub spend days using the makeshift radio service, writing letters and waiting long periods for information. In their frustration, some drive to Darwin or to Alice Springs to transact their business with government or to seek the information that they desperately need.

Hopefully, with the introduction of one-stop shops, people will be able to access information via the government computer centre. The information could be transmitted onto VDU screens or facsimile hard copies of information could be issued to the person seeking it. The payment of accounts will also be expedited because there will be no reason to track around 6 or 7 different government departments to pay accounts. It will be possible to pay accounts at 1 central depot. The government accounting mechanisms will differentiate those accounts and allocate the money into the Treasury areas for which each department has responsibility.

I am pleased also to see that initiatives are being taken in relation to recreation and sport. The Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation and Ethnic Affairs detailed some of the sporting venues that will be provided for by the budget. Some of them have been completed and the remainder will be completed later in the year. I am particularly pleased to see that the government has continued with its scheme of assisting Northern Territory teams to compete at a national and international level. The interaction between Territorians and sportsmen in other states will be extremely helpful to us in our move towards statehood. These people will demonstrate their feelings for the Northern Territory and become our ambassadors. The skills that they develop by means of cultural relationships with the states will assist these people to become better citizens of the Northern Territory.

I was particularly pleased to see that the Darwin Port Authority has addressed several of the problems created by the withdrawal of Commonwealth funding, particularly in respect of navigational aids. The Commonwealth government decided last year no longer to support any navigational aids for

entry and exit to Darwin Harbour. I found that rather frightening. All of the seaways into and out of Darwin Harbour have considerable numbers of buoys. The starboard and port buoys are absolutely necessary for safe navigation from Cape Don through Cape Hotham and the Vernon Islands to the Darwin Harbour mouth from the north and from Point Charles and Cape Fourcroy in the west. Last year, the Commonwealth government decided to withdraw all support for those and left it up to the Port Authority to continue maintaining the existing Commonwealth lights and buoys.

For a number of years, we had been asking the Commonwealth to place additional lights to assist coastal traffic, particularly our trawler fleets and, in some cases, our recreational fleets. We wanted lights provided at Fish Reef to the west of Darwin and at a particularly dangerous area for moderately deep draft vessels at the Charles Point patches. This is an area about 1.5 to 2 miles off the Point Charles light. It was not identified as a dangerously shallow area for major shipping coming into Darwin until 3 years ago when a survey vessel found that the water was particularly shallow in that area. The Commonwealth department was asked to put lights there. It installed a small radio beacon for about 18 months and then withdrew that service. The Port Authority has decided to place some buoys in that area as well. Lights are also being placed at Arontes Reef near the entrance to Port Essington to assist the recreational fleet and the trawler vessels going into Port Essington, and also at King Ash Bay.

Ports and Fisheries is undertaking a considerable amount of recreational slipway work at Nhulunbuy and around the Darwin Harbour area. It is also placing them at Adelaide River, Mary River, Bynoe Harbour and Keswick Point. Whilst it may seem strange for governments to spend considerable amounts of money on what may appear to be somewhat frivolous details, it must be remembered that capital invested in recreational craft amounts to some \$15m at the moment. That in itself creates an enormous amount of employment in the Darwin region, both for repairs and maintenance and for ancillary equipment. I think the Department of Ports and Fisheries is to be commended for taking a farsighted view on such facilities. Mr Speaker, I commend the Appropriation Bill.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a few brief comments on the Appropriation Bill. I would like to commend the Treasurer not only for a balanced budget but for a very positive budget when compared to the cries of woe from the national scene. The Territory budget is a 4-package unit comprising a positive decision not to enter into deficit budgeting, not to increase taxes ...

Mr Ede: Come on!

Mr FINCH: For the benefit of the token gesture of an opposition, and to help him to differentiate between taxes and charges, quite simply taxes include things like fringe benefits, capital gains and gold tax, and are the means that the federal government has implemented to feed its left-wing cronies. Charges relate to those items that people gain direct benefit from and are payment for services received. It is interesting to note that most of the charges imposed by the NT government still fall far short of the actual cost of services delivered.

The member for Stuart seemed to pay a fair bit of attention to what he saw as the woes of rural electorates. I would like to take the opportunity to remind the member that it is necessary to look at expenditure over a period of time and not simply itemised capital works expenditure, which he seems to

dwelling on. He commented on the fact that his particular electorate received some \$700 per resident in value of capital works. In the northern suburbs, in my electorate particularly, \$5000 was allocated last year and, as far as I can ascertain, it has received \$2000 worth of capital works this year spread between some 5000 residents. I am not bleating about that.

However, what should be obvious to the member for Stuart is that it is not just capital works that are important, not to my constituents anyway. What is important is the total expenditure that is devoted to providing services of benefit to all Territorians: education, health, provision of water supply systems and electricity. It is interesting to note that, not only is it far more costly to provide those services in rural electorates than it is in the city areas, but the people who live in my electorate pay far higher taxes. Not only that, they pay for their water and their sewerage, unlike many of the member for Stuart's constituents. They pay local government rates to cover the costs of their roads, unlike the member for Stuart's constituents. I have absolutely no idea why he should be bleating when his constituents receive some 50 times the amount of capital works than is provided to the electorate of Wagaman.

However, constituents of Wagaman are far more delighted that this government is continuing its positive program of creating jobs for Territorians, improving the lifestyle of all, including those in the member for Stuart's rural area, and providing very expensive water services despite cutbacks in federal programs for water resource projects.

Mr Ede: Where? No more water supplies are going in.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, all we hear is whinges and whines from members of the opposition. The honourable member complained that housing statistics were down. Of course they are down when interest rates are going through the roof as a result of federal government policies and the state of this country. The cost of building in the Northern Territory has risen because we use imported materials. This has been affected not only by the exchange rate of the Australian dollar but by excises charged on bringing in timber from Malaysia. These are the sort of federal government policies that affect the building industry in the Northern Territory. Where are the answers?

Of course, the member for Stuart's colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, who has flown the coop along with the rest of his partners in crime ...

Mr Ede: Come on now.

Mr FINCH: ... raised a number of matters that I think I should take issue with as well. He was having a bit of a beef about how old age pensioners, to use his words, were 'struggling to make ends meet'. The only time the socialist opposition members mention the oldies is when they want to link them with the dole recipients and all the other 'pensioner-type' people for the benefit of their left-wing cronies. It is on record that the Northern Territory government is streets in front of any of the state governments in providing services and facilities. Concessions provided to aged pensioners in the Northern Territory are far above and beyond those provided in any state. In what state does the government provide deficit budgeting to frail-aged hostels? Nowhere else would the Council on the Ageing receive the funding that it does from this government. These sorts of things stand alone. The federal President of the Australian Council on the Ageing visited the Northern Territory some 3 months ago and, when he looked at the Housing Commission

facilities for aged people and the other amenities that are provided, with significant support from the Northern Territory government, he was moved to issue a national press statement saying how impressed he was with the work that the Northern Territory government does with senior citizens.

When aged pensioners in the Northern Territory have to wait periods up to a maximum of 12 months and, in some cases, particularly in the Palmerston area, even periods as short as 1 or 2 months for allocation of pensioner housing, it is easy to see why the increase in the number of pensioners in the Northern Territory is currently about 7% per annum. No wonder our oldies are staying here. But that is about the only time we have heard from the opposition regarding pensioners.

Criticism of computer studies subsidies was another area. The federal government's program on computers in schools last year allocated \$266 000 and it is down to \$7000 this year. Northern Territory schools are way ahead of any state in that area, and for obvious reasons.

The Minister for Education outlined clearly the need for and the benefits of a university in the Northern Territory. If that does not satisfy the members opposite, I do not know what will. It is not just about providing undergraduate courses here to help our own kids attain a reasonable level of education, it is more than that. It is research that benefits the community directly. Currently, some 90 research projects are being carried out in the Northern Territory in conjunction with universities around Australia. We gain nothing, or almost nothing, from those projects. What we need is a base for those research projects to be tied to a Northern Territory university so that Territorians can gain from the studies of an area where people have faced problems not experienced anywhere else in Australia. We do not want the value of that research going down to Melbourne and other places. In looking at the future of the Northern Territory, we are talking about skills and high tech-based industries that are all part of this program, through the Trade Development Zone and the training programs that the minister has included in his budget paper. All of these things have great relevance to a university. Specific research associated with activities that will ensure diversity in the Northern Territory's economy will be so important.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about alternative ALP policies. Where are they? During the last sittings, the Leader of the Opposition said that very soon we would hear the ALP's economic policies. At that time, he said that he would release details of his economic policies within the following 3 weeks. He apologised profusely because, for some months, he had been saying to the press, 'next week, next week, next week'. Mr Speaker, he keeps saying, 'next week'. During the August sittings, he indicated that we would hear within 3 weeks. We have heard absolutely nothing since. Some 6 weeks ago, he unveiled that magnificent cornerstone of ALP economic policy - an arts festival that would bring trillions of dollars into the Northern Territory economy. Any thinking person would realise that, whilst such a project might be commendable as a facility for Territorians, it would cost a fair bit to establish and run for at least the first 5 or 10 years. It might break even then or perhaps make some money.

When he made that press release, he said that, within the next few weeks, he would issue many such economic policies. That was 6 weeks ago and we have heard nothing since, unless, of course, he was referring to the press release he issued the other day on the regurgitation of the community watch. There might be some economic implications in that. Perhaps he was referring to his industrial supplies office project. He has been yapping about that for some 3 or 4 months.

I would like to remind members of the opposition that, in fact, that is part of a Northern Territory government initiative resulting from an Australian Industry and Technology Council meeting in November 1985, at which I had the opportunity to represent the Minister for Transport and Works in his previous portfolio. That meeting agreed that all states and the Northern Territory would participate in a national register of manufacturing and supply capability. The minister gained approval from Cabinet at that stage for the Northern Territory to participate in the setting up of a database for supply etc. The Northern Territory government committed funding to that project but, of course, in typical style, the federal government is still mucking around with the establishment of that computer database. In the meantime, the Leader of the Opposition has obtained some sort of lead from his interstate cronies and sees this as an opportunity to jump on the bandwagon.

Locally, within the Northern Territory, setting up an industrial supplies office is no big deal. It is no big deal for very obvious reasons. One is that the number of major works completed in private industry are limited and any supplier, subcontractor or manufacturer worth his salt would obviously not miss the boat in ensuring that he had the opportunity to put his products or whatever in front of the project managers. Naturally enough, any major developer of any sort would not have any great difficulty, through contacting any one of the existing agencies of government, in ascertaining what particular suppliers or subcontractors were available throughout the Northern Territory.

However, there is some merit in what the Leader of the Opposition said, provided we have in place that national database, part of the system that we agreed to some 12 months ago. As I have said, it would be probably half a person's job to provide the local content. It could be done by someone attached to the Department of Business, Communications and Technology or the Trade and Marketing Service. I am quite sure that that matter will be determined at the appropriate time.

In his remarks on the Appropriation Bill, the Leader of the Opposition stated that a federal coalition government would not proceed with upgrading the Darwin Airport. When the Hawke government gains its just desserts in 1987, a federal coalition government will give top priority to the completion of the much-needed improvements at Darwin Airport. The federal opposition spokesman on aviation, Mr Bruce Lloyd, has given a very positive commitment on that. The minister has already mentioned the possibility of an extra QANTAS flight, but there are many other aspects of this matter which will be the subject of further debate during these sittings. I will be speaking not only about the economic implications of this federal insanity but of the defence implications as well, because it would seem that the federal government, including the Prime Minister and others, is quite happy to prostitute itself for the sake of political vindictiveness and expediency.

This is a most positive and constructive, free-enterprise-orientated budget, and I commend the Treasurer for his good work.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker in speaking to the Appropriation Bill this evening, I would like to congratulate the Treasurer on putting together a well-balanced budget under probably the most difficult circumstances since self-government. Indeed, it is very much to his credit that he was able to compile such a satisfactory financial program under these conditions, especially as it was his first budget.

Once upon a time, we had a Memorandum of Understanding which guaranteed the Territory a share of Commonwealth funding. It provided sufficient income for the Territory government to put its developmental plans in place, and it allowed for the years of neglect by the Commonwealth and the urgent need to end the stagnation created by the Commonwealth's attitude. This generous funding was well justified, and the memorandum met our funding requirements until Australia had the misfortune to elect a Hawke-led Labor government. Australians were misled by the charisma, the media image and the smooth tongue of the man who became Prime Minister. Territorians, for example, were promised a railway, the upgrading of the Alice Springs Airport, a new Darwin air terminal, the abolition of sales tax on freight, and so on. All these promises and many more have since been broken.

In spite of having our hopes and aspirations dashed over and over again, successive Northern Territory Treasurers have continued to bring down balanced budgets. In the last 2 years, this has become increasingly difficult because of the reduction in funding provided by the world's best Treasurer. Yes, you guessed it, I am referring to Hon Paul Keating. He has stated that, by 1988, we will be funded on the same basis as the states. However, he and his financial hatchet-man, Senator Walsh, together with that great fellow Prime Minister Hawke expected us to meekly accept the destruction of the Memorandum of Understanding without receiving the same rights as all other Australians. I am referring to those Australians who live in the states. I can tell those gentlemen that they have another think coming. They have a fight on their hands. If they believe they can get away with this latest stunt, they are really in for a battle.

It is an unfortunate fact that the Hawke Labor government treats the Northern Territory with contempt. This was evident to those who watched the recent Four Corners program on Kakadu and had the misfortune to see and hear the Minister for Art, Heritage and the Environment interviewed. The manner in which he referred to the Northern Territory government and ministers was nothing short of disgusting. In fact, if ever I have seen a beat-up, that was it. We saw an environmentalist interviewed for 10 minutes, in several segments, whilst our worthy Treasurer and Minister for Mines and Energy was interviewed for a matter of a few seconds. That is the sort of balance that was given. At least our minister was dressed in a suit and tie on that occasion. I thought he looked very presentable indeed.

Minister Cohen's remarks confirmed for me what a colonial centralist attitude he and doubtless his parliamentary colleagues have towards the Northern Territory. If anyone needs to be convinced of this, he has merely to read comments made by the Labor MP for Kalgoorlie, Graeme Campbell. He suggested that the Territory be divided into 3 different sections and that a section be given to Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland. I believe that his view represents that of the Labor Party as a whole, because nobody from the Northern Territory Labor Party refuted his comments. Even the Leader of the Opposition, who is always jumping up and down about something or other, put his head in the sand and totally ignored this fellow Campbell.

The federal Treasurer said in his August budget speech that the Australian economy faces grave difficulties. He predicted a further worsening in the terms of trade during 1986-87, and how right he was. We are on the brink of recession but the Northern Territory maintains its balanced budget. In spite of being sabotaged at every turn, it will continue to do so. It will continue to strive for development and to implement job-creation programs. These will sustain the growth we have seen in the 8 years since self-government.

Our thrust in this budget has been to limit the public sector and stimulate the private sector which, of course, is the real wealth creator in our community. In spite of having \$40m cut from our general purpose capital works payments, we transferred funds from elsewhere to maintain and increase our capital works funding by 18%. That shows the commitment of this government to stimulating development in the private sector.

That great architect of the federal Labor government's financial strategy, Senator Walsh, was recently in Darwin. He spoke to the faithful at the Labor Party dinner on 7 August. I would like to take a moment to quote an extract from his speech:

By any objective measurement, the Australian economy faces severe short and medium-term economic difficulties. For 6 years we have recorded current account deficits between 4% and 6% of GDP. The cost of servicing the accumulated debt is a major contributor to the current account problem. In the 12 months to the March quarter 1986, our terms of trade declined by 14%, which has wiped about \$5m off our 1985-86 national income. There is no immediate likelihood of a major terms of trade improvement. Indeed, there seems little doubt that further deterioration since March will take another couple of billion dollars off our 1986-87 national income.

The terms of trade decline, superimposed on pre-existing current account weaknesses, has caused the value of the Australian dollar to fall by 26% against the US dollar and 39% against the trade weighted index since January 1985. Our inflation rate, which has declined rapidly from 11.5% in 1982-83 to 5.8% in 1984-85, has now gone up to about 8%, a rate between 2 and 3 times as high as the average of our major trading nations. Employment which, for 3 years, has grown by an annual rate of 3.4% now seems likely to fall to less than 1.5%, a level which will preclude further reduction in the rate of unemployment. Some people have diagnosed the cause of these problems as a centralised wage determination system, excessive wage growth facilitated by the accord, foreign debt incurred by the federal government and the unsustainable, high rate of Australian economic growth.

I agree with Senator Walsh on all of those counts. What he does not say is that the reason why Australia is in such a financial mess, why our NTEC subsidy was cut by \$35m last year and a further \$21m this year, why it cut \$40m from our capital works funding, why it cancelled the railway project and the new Darwin air terminal and why this country is on the brink of financial disaster is because of the policies and the mismanagement of the master of the group of people who sit across there on the opposition benches. They are the servants of the Hawke Labor government and the mismanagement that I have just referred to, as stated by Senator Walsh, confirms that, like all Labor governments, they ride the tiger of the left wing. While the pragmatists like Prime Minister Hawke try to guide it to the right, it continually pulls to the left. He has found, to his regret that, if he pulls too hard, it will wheel around and bite him on the leg. He has just been bitten, and the polls reflect that. He is losing the support of the trendies, the traditional left. His recent exercise in visiting Kakadu was undertaken to appease the greenies, the peace groups and the environmentalists.

In spite of the continuing pressure and difficulties faced by our Treasurer, he has presented an excellent budget. Let me now turn my attention to some of the items of particular interest to me. Casuarina High School has

received substantial funding to upgrade it to a secondary college. This move is proving a tremendous success in spite of the dissent and misinformation created by the Teachers Federation President, Bob Wharton, whom members will recall walked out of the working party meeting last year and subsequently resigned. Today, we find that his members, the teachers at that particular secondary college, feel very comfortable about the change. In fact, most of them want to stay right there. There has been almost no turnover of teachers in the last 12 months at the Casuarina Secondary College and yet, 12 months ago, because of Mr Wharton and his activities, they were all fired up. It is part of the exciting new development.

Let me inform members of some of the work that has been allowed for at Casuarina Secondary College in this budget: upgrading specialist facilities - \$429 752; extensions and modifications to convert to secondary colleges - and this is split with the Darwin High School - \$358 491; construction of an automotive workshop - \$110 000; provision of science teaching and staff facilities - \$500 000; library extensions \$750 000; and the provision of new transportable classrooms - \$130 000.

Let us have a look at some other activities that have been undertaken in or adjacent to my electorate. There is an item under 'Works in Progress' for the Marrara Sporting Complex - \$1 598 848. The McMillans Road duplication from Bagot Road to Lee Point Road has been allocated \$2 474 700. For the Darwin Rapid Creek pedestrian bridge, there is an allocation of \$443 382. For the installations of a master control system to synchronise the traffic lights at McMillans Road, there is an allocation of \$59 054. There have been a number of other initiatives which I applaud: \$12m to the Northern Territory University College; the Police Training Centre received \$3.4m; the fire station on Trower Road - \$4.1m; and Katherine East High School - \$13.5m. And so it goes on. It is a productive and growth-stimulating budget.

However, the bottom line is that, until we gain control of our destiny, we will have to continue to accept whatever these people in Canberra want to dish out to us. This confirms to me that we must choose statehood as soon as possible because, until we do so, we will have no control over our own resources. We must gain that control because it is absolutely essential to the financial stability of the Northern Territory. I refer in particular to the control of uranium mining, of national parks and all lands, including Aboriginal lands. These are the keys to the door of our financial future and this government will not rest until it has achieved that goal. I commend the bill.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. I ask the honourable member for Stuart if he would be so kind as to convey to the other members of F Troop, better known as the Northern Territory Branch of the Australian Labor Party or the 6-pack, that they might care to submit questions that they want answered in the interests of having constructive debate in the committee stage rather than ad hoc political point-scoring. It would be useful if questions could be made available to ministers during the course of tomorrow so that reasonable debate can occur on Thursday during the committee stage. Since the member for Stuart is the sole representative of the opposition here this evening, I ask him to convey that message to his colleagues.

The opposition's economic spokesman said that it was with considerable anger and disappointment that he rose to respond to the Treasurer's first budget. We all know that hell has no fury like the opposition economic spokesman's scorn. He ran out of things to say in about the first 5 minutes.



All he could say was that he was angry. Quite obviously, he did not understand what the budget papers were all about. One thing he mentioned that I think was a significant contribution to this year's budget was the economic statement. For the first time it gave members, the media and the general public an opportunity to look at a set of figures, compiled in 1 booklet, which provided a warts-and-all scenario of the current economic status and the projected economic status ...

Mr Ede: What a lot of warts there were. What a sorry picture.

Mr COULTER: As I said, we are unashamed of the economic statement. It did not seek to cover or hide any of the facts or issues. I am sorry that I shall have to start picking on the honourable member for Stuart because he is the only one here, and I congratulate him for his tenacity, resilience and ability to stay behind ...

Mr Ede: It is woeful. I'm missing out on a good dinner tonight.

Mr COULTER: ... to hold the fort for F Troop.

The simple facts are that motor registrations are down. The fringe benefits tax, introduced by Keating, has affected the whole national car industry.

Mr Ede: Didn't you know about it?

Mr COULTER: We knew about it, and we said in our economic statement that we believed motor registrations would be down 21%. We predicted that. I was ridiculed about the fringe benefits tax by the federal Treasurer. When I said it would cost the Northern Territory \$15m, he said: 'Rubbish, the figure is \$5m'. When his Treasury people grabbed their figures and my figures and sat down and worked them out, they agreed that it would be closer to \$15m.

Mr Ede: Bob Collins saved you, eh?

Mr COULTER: Bob Collins saved us!

Mr Perron: He saved us nothing.

Mr Ede: He did, which is more than you did for the Territory.

Mr COULTER: We still do not know if there have been any relative savings or not because the whole thing about the introduction of the fringe benefits tax is that the federal government ...

Mr Ede: You don't understand what he was doing. We can only help you mob just so much.

Mr COULTER: The federal government did not know what it was doing. It still does not know what it is doing and, of course, all Australians are now becoming concerned ...

Mr Ede: I fixed your gold tax. He fixed your fringe benefits tax.

Mr COULTER: ... that it may not know what it is doing ever again, if it knew in the first place.

However, the economic statement was compiled and formed the core of the budget papers this year. It is interesting to note that the media are still quoting from the economic statement because it was a factual document. I believe that it, and the budget, will stand the test of time throughout the year and provide all Territorians with a clear picture of where the CLP government sees the Territory going in the future.

The member for Arafura spoke on his favourite subject: casino taxes. I can inform honourable members that, since 1 October, the Darwin casino and the Alice Springs casino have been paying taxes at the rate of 8%. He said the \$1m figure was too round and rubbery. It is very difficult to predict how much people will gamble in any 1 year. An estimation is made on the basis of known factors. I am confident that \$1m will be exceeded in casino taxes during this year. It is a figure that has been determined on the basis of the best estimates, and I can advise members that the casino tax is now being paid at 8% in Darwin and Alice Springs. Let us put that one to rest to begin with.

The member for Nhulunbuy raised several matters concerning the Northern Territory's debt. He said basically that our debt is too great and that it has grown rapidly since self-government. Of course it has grown since self-government. We had none at self-government and we have established a debt bank, if you like, over the years. This was calculated for in the Memorandum of Understanding and it is understood by the Grants Commission that we have established a debt record. It has grown simply because, in 1978, we did not have any debt. We inherited some significant debts. We took over a powerhouse that was built in the 1950s on which we owed \$56m. It should never have been built in the first place. It was antiquated and used old technology from the very beginning. I think Canberra must have got it cheap. Probably it was a boiler house at the Australian War Museum or something and it was decided that it could not be used there any longer so it was passed to the Northern Territory. We took many projects of that kind which established the debt bank that we have today.

The Territory has been given the capacity to service most of those debts as part of the Memorandum of Understanding. Of course, when talking about the Memorandum of Understanding or, as Mr Keating and Mr Walsh described it, the 'grubby little document' drawn up between 2 conservative governments, it is my personal belief, and it is shared by many of my colleagues, that it no longer exists. That is because, 2 years ago, the federal government tore up the Memorandum of Understanding by removing 50% of the NTEC subsidy. It said that it was entering into a new deal and the memorandum no longer existed. The new deal lasted some 12 short months before what was left was reduced by a further 50%. Mr Speaker, can this federal government be trusted? If you think we are the only ones asking that question, ask the Papua New Guinea people who had a Memorandum of Understanding which lasted 20 days. These are the international negotiators that we have in Canberra at the moment.

The Memorandum of Understanding no longer exists and I believe that there will be a further attack on the NTEC subsidy in the next budget as this country plunges further and further into debt. It is a simple fact that we are approaching a debt of \$14 000m. We are 39th on the international credit rating, between Cyprus and Barbados, and we are slipping down daily.

Mr Bell: You have the biggest debt in Australia.

Mr COULTER: It is nice to see that another member of F Troop has joined us now. The honourable member for MacDonnell has returned and joined his colleague, the member for Stuart. It is good to see that some interest is still shown in the budget.

Mr Ede: It is such an exciting speech.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, it appears that they do not care. The simple fact is that once a debt ratio of between \$12 000m and \$15 000m is reached, all that may be able to be done is pay the interest on that debt forever. This is the situation that the world's greatest Treasurer has put Australia into. The members opposite belong to the very same political party. How dare they talk of deficits in the Northern Territory when their own Labor Party colleague has placed Australia in a precarious position that we may never get out of?

Mr Ede: What percentage of it is government debt? It is not government debt, you nit.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Treasurer will resume his seat. The member for Stuart will withdraw his most unparliamentary remark.

Mr Ede: Mr Speaker, I withdraw my remark unreservedly.

Mr COULTER: As I said, the Territory's debt has risen over the years because we had none to start off with.

This is a tight budget and it has been framed under difficult circumstances and conditions. The member for Stuart took pains to tell us about the difference between taxes and charges, although I am still not sure if he knows the difference between the 2. He ridiculed the statement in the budget that there would be no new taxes, and there were no new taxes. In fact, most of the charges were introduced before the budget was brought down. Not too many of them are involved in the budget itself.

The truth is that the principle that the budget was established on, the promotion of private enterprise and the maintenance of our capital works program, has stood the test of time, and I believe that we will finish the year 1986-87 in very good economic circumstances. This is because of the commitment of departmental heads, and I congratulate the departmental heads who have had to enforce the budget. The budget is not about standing in this Legislative Assembly for 47 minutes and making a speech from a large sheaf of notes; it is about implementing an economic strategy. I congratulate the departmental heads and senior executive officers and, indeed, all executive officers throughout the public service who have made a real attempt to implement this budget. I believe that the various sectors of industry have appreciated that the Northern Territory government is prepared to make hard decisions and that we refuse to enter into deficit budgeting.

The member for Stuart had some problems understanding deficit budgeting also. It simply means that we do not spend more dollars in each particular year than we have been able to raise in that year. If that is in loan funds, so what, Mr Speaker? The opposition's colleagues in the states have borrowed in the vicinity of \$120m and \$140m each year. For the first time, the Northern Territory will borrow some \$22m in semi-government funds. There seems to be some problem with that. The member for Stuart seems to think that we have deficit budgeting because we have loans at the moment. Let me give him an example. In Victoria, there is legislation that prevents the government from deficit budgeting yet we believe that the Labor government in Victoria is in debt to the tune of something like \$300m. The Victorian government has lost about \$170m on the Portland smelter.

South Australia is in a similar predicament. In New South Wales, nobody would know what the government is up to. It is a little bit like the Crimes Commission and everybody knows what the Crimes Commission is in New South Wales - it is about 20%. But, nobody would know where it is at in terms of its budget. It is fairly well hidden. The Northern Territory government has been quite open in its budgetary deliberations. It has laid all its facts and figures on the table, and we believe that we have a budget that will put us on a sound economic footing and take us into 1987-88 in front. There are not too many states in Australia which have the opportunity to do that.

Some of the states are desperately relying on measures like the gold tax. Victoria is grasping at straws to grab any piece of revenue to try to extract itself from its predicament. South Australia mined something like \$25 000 worth of gold last year. It does not care about a gold tax.

In terms of revenue, what amazed me was the member for Stuart coming back from the ALP conference in Tasmania saying that he had singlehandedly stopped the gold tax.

Mr Ede: That is incorrect.

Mr COULTER: I will provide the member for Stuart's press statements.

Mr Ede: I did it before I came back.

Mr COULTER: He talked about what he had done to remove the gold tax, and I will remind him of that tomorrow when I have consulted the little file I have on the member for Stuart. I will remind him because, obviously, he has forgotten what he said.

The Northern Territory government will not tax industries out of existence. We will provide them with opportunities to get on with growth, and this budget will allow that to happen. The capital works program was maintained because it is the life-blood of the Northern Territory. We are about development. As I said when speaking earlier today, we are unashamedly pro-development. Our record speaks for itself: schools programs, sports ovals, the university, the safe ship mooring at Frances Bay, development funding for primary production, money for the Trade Development Zone and tourism industry finance. Health services were maintained and the Department of Community Development was also able to maintain a meaningful program which met the needs of all Territorians.

I would like to turn to a contentious issue. I have said time and time again in the Assembly that I would like to provide members opposite with a briefing on contingent liabilities. Some years ago, this government seeded an industry. It developed places like Yulara and the Sheratons in Alice Springs and Darwin. I am unashamed of the efforts made by previous ministers to establish such wonderful facilities. They will enable us to capture the tourist markets that we hear the Leader of the Opposition talk about from time to time. The simple fact is that the Minister for Tourism is now considering extensions to Yulara. This is the white elephant the opposition told us about just 12 months ago. We are now looking at developing additional accommodation at Yulara. The Sheraton at Yulara is nothing less than a masterpiece. Its design is ideal, it provides wonderful accommodation, and it is held in very high esteem by overseas visitors and Alice Springs locals alike.

We also hear the opposition knocking casinos from time to time. The new owners of the Alice Springs Sheraton have development plans which will enable

Alice Springs to have an even better facility. I believe that this government has nothing to be ashamed about in relation to the casino in Alice Springs. The Darwin casino refurbishments and the high rollers being attracted to private gambling facilities now available will result in increased revenue. The 8% gambling tax will result in \$1m revenue to the government this year. The casinos will be a major tourist attraction.

If ever there was an act of faith in the Territory's future, it came recently when John Aspinall telexed me to say that he was considering providing \$250 000 for a horse race in Darwin. \$100 000 would be provided for a cup with the other \$150 000 spread throughout the day. That is the kind of visionary mentality that we require if we are to develop the Northern Territory. A man who is prepared to take a gamble.

Mr Ede: On a horse race.

Mr COULTER: Let me tell the member for Stuart that only 1 other provincial race in Australia is worth \$100 000, and that happens to be at Bunbury. Next is the Prime Minister's Cup at Southport which is worth \$80 000. Here we have an investor from London who is prepared to put \$250 000 on the table because he believes in the Northern Territory. By putting up \$250 000 for a horse race, John Aspinall is showing his confidence in the Northern Territory. There are other examples. Lord McAlpine has become involved in the Northern Territory because he knows that the Northern Territory government ...

Mr Ede: What is he doing?

Mr COULTER: The member for Stuart does not know what he is doing.

Mr Ede: You do not know what he is doing.

Mr COULTER: It is not an obscenity, which is what Mr Hawke calls development. It is not mischievous, as you describe Coronation Hill.

Mr Ede: Well, what is it?

Mr COULTER: It is not even in your language. It is called jobs for our kids. That is what comes from these kinds of people putting their money into development proposals such as that at Myilly Point. I have no doubt in my mind that Myilly Point will be developed, and it will be a magnificent tourist infrastructure. I hope to have the opportunity to sit down with my kids and go back through Hansard and say: 'This is what your dad did'.

We have demonstrated to all Territorians today what the Labor Party platform and the alternative government are about. We have shown just what sort of economic mismanagement would occur if the Labor Party ever formed a government in the Northern Territory. There is no way that that will happen. It could not happen and it will not happen because Northern Territorians do not want or need a government that is against development, against mining, against tourism and against almost anything that provides job opportunities, education for our kids or health services.

Most particularly, Labor wants to ensure that Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory remain under the social welfare umbrella in the social industry that Labor has created. That must be dismantled to give those people new opportunities. The Minister for Community Development has outlined the efforts he is making to ensure through community government that the people

closest to the action become responsible for their own destinies and have the opportunity of making those decisions for themselves. We hear from the opposition benches that yet another consultant is about to trapeze into this social playground to rescue its colleagues who are in danger of being put out of a job. These are the lawyers, the white advisers and the whole industry which has sprung up to ensure that Aboriginal people live in poverty and degradation which has been generated by themselves and the various Commonwealth government bureaucracies.

We have come up with many innovative ideas in this year's budget. As I said, it is a budget for hard times. It has not been easy to reduce the public service by up to 300 positions already. It was a hard decision to make but it has been done in the interest of jobs: short-term decisions for long-term goals. The visionaries on the other side fall over their bootlaces because they cannot see that far in front of them. We will demonstrate as we move into the latter half of this year that the government's economic strategy is working. We have been able to fulfil almost every election promise that we have made. I think there are 2 to go. One of them is to ensure that the Northern Territory ALP never has any more than the 6 seats that it has now. I am sure that will be easily realised as long as members opposite continue to display the mentality that they displayed in debates in this Assembly today.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I thank all officers of the Northern Territory Treasury for their hard work and dedication in putting together this budget. I thank all executive officers and departmental heads who have implemented this budget and my colleagues, the ministers responsible for various departments. I ask the member for Stuart, as the lone ranger of F Troop, to take the message to his colleagues that, if they want informed, constructive debate on Thursday during the committee stage, they should submit questions to the ministers tomorrow. I make that offer on behalf of all my colleagues who will be only too willing to answer any of their questions. I hope that they will take advantage of that offer.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Committee stage to be taken later.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to record the passing of Edward James Lester Stiles of Rapid Creek who died on 24 September. Ted, as he was known to his family and friends, was a local identity, the type of man that this Territory was founded by. Ted left behind his daughters, Wendy Farrell of Alice Springs, Camille Fogarty of Timber Creek, Elaine Simpson of Cairns and Melody Turnbull of Gympie and his son, Steven Stiles, of Darwin. Ted was born in Perth in 1909. He was a foundation member of Wesley College in Perth. He was a long distance swimmer of some repute in the 1920s and 1930s and won many trophies. He married Lena Woods, who was also a swimmer, and then worked on the Western Australian goldfields. He and his wife swam in a relay race in Kalgoorlie many years ago against the Japanese team when the butterfly stroke was first introduced into Australia. Ted and his wife travelled along the old coast road from Perth to Adelaide where he picked up a paying passenger, a Mr Lang, and then headed on his long trek north to the Northern Territory in 1936.

His carriage of the day was a 1934 Chevvy ute with a canvas hood and wooden tray. On arriving in the Territory, Ted first settled in Tennant Creek where the locals soon discovered that he was a saxophone player of some renown. He was later employed by the Department of the Interior in Alice Springs as a plumber. During the war years, Ted worked on essential services looking after water supplies on stock routes between Alice Springs and Birdum, and Wave Hill and Burnette Downs. During this period, he also carted supplies out to Tanami and the Granites goldfields. Ted risked his life when he rescued an Aboriginal woman and child when his truck was washed off the causeway at Tennant Creek. The truck completely disappeared into the water.

After the war, he started a scrap metal business and, in 1949, he purchased a Commer truck and started Outback Transport, a well-known local company. Ted brought the first modern Mack truck into the Territory, an AB61. He carted perishables from Alice Springs to Darwin and Alice Springs to Mount Isa and served the many small communities along the side of the track. He also started the first refrigerated service to these towns. At its peak, his fleet grew to 6 trucks and he became a local identity known for his sense of humour and his generous nature.

Whilst playing his saxophone at a do in Adelaide River after the war, Ted vanished from the white ant-eaten stage in a cloud of dust but, such was the man, he did not miss a beat. Unfortunately, his heart did and, some years ago, he had a pacemaker fitted. Even that did not keep poor old Ted going and he died a little while ago. He was a true pioneer of the Territory and I know he will be sadly missed by many of his friends and particularly by his family. I offer my condolences to the family.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, tonight I wish to speak on a subject on which you no doubt spoke and acted on over the many years during which you had the honour of representing the electorate of Stuart. However, I am afraid to say, Mr Speaker, that you were no more successful than I have been in relation to this particular matter. I refer to the water supply at the Anningie community.

My involvement with the water supply at Anningie goes back to 1979 or 1980 when, as the Director of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, I was invited to be a member of the Water Needs Committee in central Australia. I must add that the nomination came from the Northern Territory government and was opposed very vociferously by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs which objected to my being on that committee. However, thanks to the support of the Northern Territory government, I was on that committee and one point that I raised very was the fact that Anningie community had no water. At that stage, it was surviving by what it could get out of a soak in Anningie Creek.

I am afraid to say that the situation has not improved a great deal. In those days, I was a proponent of a Mexican dam for Anningie. I said that I agreed that the water in the area was probably not of sufficient quality to be able to be used by the community for drinking and suggested that a Mexican dam be built. A Mexican dam is constructed on a creek which has a impermeable bed rock and a sufficient depth of sand so that you can scrape out a trench across the creek. By the use of wire gabions to hold up one side, you then place an impermeable substance to stop the water from moving through. We can use plastic sheeting these days whereas the Mexicans used clay. The advantage of this system is that the water itself banks up underneath the sand and you do not have the very high level of evaporation that occurs in central Australia with water that is held above ground. The other advantage is that there are not the same dangers from bacteriological infestation of the waters. The

battle continued and there was always going to be something done about it. I will not go too far back into history because I do not have the time to go through all the years of arguments.

The first item I had on my file in January 1985 was a letter from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. I was despairing of support from the then Minister for Community Development. At that stage, there had been a changeover in the ministry. The then Minister for Education had been replaced by the then Treasurer. The answer from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was, once again, not particularly helpful. It told me what I already knew: that the chances of finding a potable water supply appeared poor and that, since it was 2 years since the groundwater survey had been carried out, the department was proposing that the Water Division of the Department of Transport and Works carry out a further survey. I knew that would do very little good. However, instead of spending the money on the Mexican dam I had originally proposed, they decided to carry out 1 more ground water survey.

I have a letter from Mr Robertson, the then Minister for Health, stating that he had raised the matter of health problems associated with the lack of water in the Anningie area and would hopefully do something about it. I then wrote to the current Treasurer, then Minister for Community Development, advising that the diaphragm pumps, which had been connected, were continuously breaking down and were completely inadequate. The Minister for Community Development wrote back setting out 3 different options. The first was provision of de-salination equipment. The second was the reticulation of potable water from the nearest known supply which the department said was a some 25 km away. In fact, the distance is 7 km, but we all know that this department takes the long way around. The third was to use some other means of obtaining water from Anningie Creek.

I hoped that the Department of Community Development would take up my proposal of a Mexican dam. However, by 13 January 1986, I was a bit worried. I became more specific and wrote again to the minister protesting once more about the Anningie water supply, advising that the Anningie community, which is an excision on Anningie Station, had very poor groundwater potential and that I had put forward the Mexican dam proposal 7 years before and it was still the best option. I pointed out the problems with the inefficient and unreliable diaphragm pumps that were always breaking down. I stated that a better option was to connect solar pumps to an overhead tank which would provide good quality water. There was also potential for using groundwater for washing and horticulture.

Mr Dale: Horticulture?

Mr EDE: The minister laughs at the idea of horticulture. Communities in my electorate carry out a fair range of horticultural activities. It was disappointing that, in answer to a question regarding the potential of alternatives to cattle in central Australia, the minister did not address himself to the significant amount of horticultural activity which, as you would know, Mr Speaker, is carried out by communities in central Australia who are striving for a form of self-sufficiency. It is something that I hope the minister might address himself to.

To return to the story of my correspondence with the minister, I had the answer in February. It was stated that consideration had been given to supplying non-potable water for showers but there was no guarantee that people would not drink the water which might have harmful results. If that is not paternalism, I do not know what is. Additionally, advice was received



suggesting that the use of rainwater tanks was not a viable option because of the irregularity of rainfall. Of course, it was forgotten that the cattle stations in the area have utilised the ...

Mr Dale: Were they drinking the water?

Mr EDE: They do not have any groundwater. How can they drink it if they do not have it? There is no bore water. They were drinking out of a soak!

Mr Speaker, would you please ask him to keep quiet? He is wasting my time.

The fact is that the minister said that rainwater tanks were not viable. He said that in spite of the experience of cattle stations in these areas. He stated that an amount of \$70 000 had been provided for the Water Resources Division to channel water to a point near the bank of Anningie Creek where a well would be constructed. Water would then be pumped to a storage facility. This was approaching the solution I had already proposed: the Mexican dam. I must congratulate the then Minister for Community Development, now Treasurer, on his assurance that my concerns were shared by the government which had 'made every effort to provide a source of drinking water for the Anningie people'.

By June 1986, I was starting to get worried again. I raised this with the Director of the Water Resources Division. I asked him if he could advise me what was going on. Mr Ron Freyling wrote back for the Director of the Water Resources Division on 9 July. He said: 'Site investigation work for the dam proposal is being carried out'. We were back to what I had talked about years before: a Mexican dam.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member has had to contend with quite a number of interjections over the last 5 or 10 minutes. I would ask all honourable members to treat him with a degree of courtesy, given the lateness of the hour.

Mr EDE: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

He stated that the report would form the basis of design and construction work on the dam and pumping system. I advised the community of that. I wrote in July to the minister, who is now the current Minister for Community Development, saying that I was hopeful that that would form the basis of an answer to the problems of Anningie. By September, I still had no answer although the previous letter had stated that the problem would be solved. In that letter, the previous Minister for Community Development stated: 'It is anticipated that construction of the well will be completed by the end of April'.

Mr Speaker, by September, another person who is known very well to you, old Mr Presley, had gone blind because of the trachoma that he contracted from not having a decent water supply and - it is not a laughing matter - very understandably I became very angry and I wrote to the minister. I stated that so far nothing had been done and nothing could be done on the Mexican dam that had been proposed in 1979, and had been agreed to by his predecessor, and that, in the meantime, the people go blind, the children are hospitalised with gastroenteritis, and the whole problem seems to be conveniently shuffled off to some group of experts in Sydney whilst nothing happens.

Mr Speaker, on 28 October, the minister wrote: 'I am advised that, despite exhaustive investigations by officers, there is no reasonable means of providing sufficient water for this group'. And that, Mr Speaker, is a load of absolute rubbish. It is codswallop. The options have been studied year after year. The experts have agreed that it is possible. They have agreed that they can do it within the budget provided, and it is obvious to me that this minister has decided that he will neglect the 150 people who live at Anningie and that, as far as he is concerned, they can continue to go blind and be hospitalised. The people in the Ti Tree area are the most hospitalised group of people in that central area, and there is absolutely no reason for it. The water is there, not 10 m from where they live. But, because the minister will not take the option of utilising a Mexican dam and allowing people to take the water through what is a sensible option in central Australian conditions, he has decided to wash his hands of it. He says they have to find some other land.

How many years has it taken them to get that land? You know yourself, Mr Speaker, that they fought for that land for years. Finally, they obtained an excision. Now that they have that land the minister tells them that they cannot live there and will have to move somewhere else because he will not address himself to the option of a Mexican dam. I for one am disgusted.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I will be brief tonight because of the lateness of the hour. I would like to add my remarks to those of the member for Araluen in speaking of the unfortunate death of Mr Ted Stiles who was one of my constituents of later years. I knew him as one of nature's gentlemen. I knew of his work in the Northern Territory for a number of years, although I did not know him very well when we first arrived here. He was a worker who contributed in no small way to the Darwin we know today, and those of his children who remain in the Territory had a father they could look up to. I believe that the 2 of his children that I know well will make their mark in the Northern Territory in later years, just as their father did.

Mr Speaker, I asked the Minister for Primary Production a question this morning regarding the proposed inspectorial services of the federal Department of Primary Industry that are to take over those of the Northern Territory Department of Primary Production at some time in the future. This is to be by arrangement. I understand that it follows from the royal commission into the meat industry which occurred 4 or 5 years ago. In his answer to my question, if my memory serves me correctly, and I had also been told previously, the minister said that the paramount consideration in the adoption of the inspectorial services of DPI instead of our own was finance.

I would hope that we are not selling our heritage for a mess of potage. The minister said that the inspectors of DPI will continue the meat export inspectorial services, and this is what one would expect, but they will also undertake local inspection work. I believe he said also that our DPP inspectors would either continue to receive training as meat inspectors or training would be available to new applicants who wish to become inspectors. I could not quite understand it because to me that is duplication. If we are to pass the inspectorial powers over to DPI, why do we need our own? That is duplication and will cost money, and I hope that has been weighed up against the other financial considerations that are supposed to be so beneficial. I hope our inspectorial services will not be needed in the future, but I suspect they will.

Mr Speaker, we all know what happened at Mudginberri abattoir when the DPI inspectors refused to cross a picket line which was mounted outside the export

abattoirs. It was mounted by the AMIEU workers and their friends. I would like to know what assurances we will have in the Northern Territory that there will be a watertight agreement that this sort of thing will not happen again. I would want a watertight reassurance given to me before I would be happy with any Department of Primary Industry inspectorial services in the Northern Territory in place of our own Department of Primary Production inspectorial services.

I attended all the hearings in Darwin of the royal commission into the meat industry when it was conducted some years ago. I was very conscious of the comments made by employees of the Department of Primary Industry about the deficiencies of the service. To my way of thinking, it was a second-class service and I hope it has improved for our sakes. It was a very second-class inspectorial service when compared to that offered by our Department of Primary Production personnel yet it is these people who will now be employed on our behalf.

When the Department of Primary Industry inspectors refused to cross the iniquitous picket line that the AMIEU mounted outside Mudginberri abattoir, they caught the general public unawares. We all went around like chooks with their heads cut off hoping that someone would settle the complaint. It was settled finally in the courts in Mudginberri's favour, but it took a long time and a great deal of money.

Mr Speaker, the next time something like that happens, and I sincerely hope it doesn't happen, but the next time a picket line or other obstruction is mounted against the free flow of commerce, I have said, and I will state publicly, that I will make it my business to organise public objections so that the people who mount the picket line will certainly not have it all their own way. We have had enough of the southern members of the AMIEU dictating to us how we will behave and how we will work in our meat industry. They receive the support of the inspectors employed by the Department of Primary Industry. This type of situation cannot be tolerated in future. I believe that it may happen if Department of Primary Industry inspectors take over. If people are alerted to the danger now, they will be ready if it does take over and we will be able to mount our public objections just as Jay and Joy Pendarvis did but, hopefully, at an earlier stage.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, Message No 11 has been received from His Honour the Administrator.

I, Eric Eugene Johnston, the Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, in pursuance of section 11 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a bill for an act to promote occupational health and safety in the Territory, to prevent industrial injuries and disease and to promote the rehabilitation and maximum recovery from incapacity of injured workers, to provide financial compensation to workers incapacitated from industrial injuries or diseases and to the dependants of workers who die as a result of such injuries or diseases, to establish certain bodies and a fund for the proper administration of the act, and for related purposes.

Dated 11 November 1986

E.E. JOHNSTON

Administrator

PETITION  
Yirara College

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 775 citizens of the Northern Territory praying that Yirara College and its education program facilities be maintained at their present level. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly, we the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully petition the Speaker and honourable members of the Legislative Assembly as follows. We request that: (1) the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate continue to be available to students attending Yirara College; (2) students from communities which have post-primary facilities still be permitted to attend Yirara College; and (3) staffing be maintained at levels which would permit current school and social programs to continue. As in duty bound, we ever pray.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT  
Cyanide Spill

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in relation to the recent cyanide spill in the vicinity of Barrow Creek. The Territory recently experienced a unique and unfortunate set of circumstances that led to a spillage of cyanide south of Barrow Creek. This matter naturally is of legitimate concern both to the Territory government and the community at large. I table the accident reports provided to me by the Chief Inspector of Dangerous Goods. Those reports will be circulated to honourable members.

It is worth putting this accident into some historical context, particularly as the member for Stuart, sometimes known by my colleagues as

Cyanide Sam, has made public reference to a series of similar incidents in the Territory. What is important about past incidents is that each of them gave the Territory government better insight into the legislation needed to deal with such matters, culminating in the introduction of the Dangerous Goods Act in March 1985.

In 1976, a full trailer of sodium cyanide drums overturned near Barrow Creek and the spilled product was successfully recovered. In 1980, about 6 t was spilled at Orange Creek, south of Alice Springs, and all material was recovered from the dry creek bed. In 1982, two 200 L drums of diluted cyanide liquid split open when a utility left the road approximately 18 km north of Alice Springs. No environmental damage occurred. In 1984, about 100 kg of sodium cyanide spilled when 2 drums dropped from a truck at the Alice Springs test station. All material was recovered without injury.

With the introduction of the NT Dangerous Goods Act, control measures were introduced. These were based on the national code which is the Australian Code for Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road and Rail. In recent years, this code has been adopted by all states and the Territory with some minor variations.

Since the introduction of the NT legislation, there have been 2 incidents involving 2 drums being lost from a trailer near Ti Tree Gap. All material was cleared up and the transport company took steps to modify its stowage practices. This incident also highlighted the need for coordinated response planning amongst emergency services. This was developed soon after and agreed procedures were prepared to meet future emergencies of a similar nature. These procedures were brought into play in 1986 with the Barrow Creek incident. This incident is the subject of the accident report that I have tabled.

I would like briefly to summarise the circumstances surrounding the incident and the measures that were taken in response to it. On Thursday 9 October 1986, a road train carrying 454 drums of sodium cyanide overturned while avoiding an abandoned motorcycle which had previously been involved in an accident with a stray cow. No doubt, the member for Stuart will mention the stray cow at some stage, as he did when he went to the media representatives in Alice Springs. About 50 drums split open and caused white cyanide pellets to spread across the surface and the edge of the roadway.

Emergency authorities in Alice Springs responded to the incident. Officers of the Northern Territory Fire Service were out at the scene in the early hours of Friday morning. The fire service, with the cooperation of TNT Transport and the police, conducted clean-up operations. Initial coordination was provided from Alice Springs police headquarters by the Inspector of Dangerous Goods in Alice Springs. Late on Friday morning, the Inspector of Dangerous Goods attended the site and assisted in the clean-up which continued until late Saturday afternoon on 11 October. A detailed final clean-up was conducted by the Inspector of Dangerous Goods for a further 2 days.

The primary clean-up involved the removal of spilled material and topsoil, and recovery of intact drums for re-use. Recovered materials were taken to the Warrego Mine for re-use or disposal in the tailings dam. During the clean-up, pool chlorine was used to break down the cyanide. In the final 2 days of the clean-up, the Inspector of Dangerous Goods removed other traces of material from the roadside and treated residues with pool chlorine. At that time, it was considered that the site had been adequately cleaned to ensure public safety based on the reasonable assumption that no one would

deliberately seek out the area or hazard into it. Any residual cyanide would break down under the effects of chlorine treatment and weathering.

As a result of this accident, a direction was issued by the Chief Inspector of Dangerous Goods requiring any transport company handling cyanide to use freight containers to convey packaged loads exceeding 400 kg and to provide at least 7 days notice of new loads entering the Northern Territory. The Department of Law has been asked to provide an opinion concerning the possibility of prosecuting the carrying company involved.

Mr Speaker, this incident has been the subject of dramatic and, at times, misleading press speculation. I would like to take the opportunity to correct a number of misunderstandings that have been perpetrated upon the community, primarily by the member for Stuart, Cyanide Sam. I am concerned that comments attributed to the member for Stuart in a recent article published in the Centralian Advocate were used to raise public anxiety under headlines such as 'Death Sparks Cyanide Fears'. The death referred to turned out to be that of a cow which had been run over by the motorcycle at the beginning of the freak chain of events that saw the road train overturn on the side of the road. The member for Stuart is like Chicken Licken. He is always saying that the sky is falling down. He did it with his comments on the gas pipeline also. I guess his tactics would not come as too much of a shock to members of the Assembly. Members of the public fortunately do not have to come face to face with the member for Stuart very often. When they see such dramatic headlines on the front page of newspapers, you can understand the anxiety that he creates.

What concerns me more, however, is the action subsequently taken by the honourable member. He has admitted handing over material, which he alleges was recovered from the site of the spill, to members of the media - not to government officials but to other members of the public - in a most irresponsible attempt to draw attention to his cause and to gain cheap political mileage. The material handed in by reporters to the Dangerous Goods Branch in Alice Springs has been fully analysed and found to be deteriorated sodium cyanide which is still potentially dangerous if handled or ingested. Did he transship this in a container that was registered as safe? He had reason to believe that the material was cyanide. What did he do? He placed it in envelopes and distributed it freely throughout the community!

Mr Ede: What a load of rubbish!

Mr COULTER: He gave new meaning to the expression 'poison pen letters'.

I have a letter from the member for Stuart which is addressed to Mr Terry McKay, the Chief Inspector of Dangerous Goods. I would like to congratulate the public servant on his dedication to duty when, on receiving an envelope from the member for Stuart, he was prepared to open it. I certainly will not open any envelopes mailed to me by the member for Stuart ever again. I will talk more about that letter towards the end of my statement.

The material handed in by the reporters to the Dangerous Goods Branch in Alice Springs has been fully analysed and found to be deteriorated sodium cyanide which is potentially dangerous. As a result of receiving this material, a supervising inspector of industrial safety in Alice Springs revisited and inspected the site of the accident. He saw no need to take further remedial action as the small number of residual pellets, which were weathering, were well out of reach of the public and needed deliberately to be prised from the ground to remove them. The visit confirmed that the clean-up

procedures had been satisfactorily effected. Residual traces of cyanide would break down in a short period due to the effects of natural weathering and the chlorine treatment. Once again, this decision was made on the assumption that no reasonable person would deliberately hazard into the area and search out residual cyanide traces. That the member for Stuart adopted this course says more about his lack of good sense than about the safety procedures adopted in this particular instance.

The Dangerous Goods Branch cannot be expected to take all responsibility for ensuring that the honourable member does not thrust his hand into acid, fire or any other material that a reasonable person could be expected to avoid. What is of real concern is that the honourable member was prepared to share the risks arising from his own stupidity with other members of the public.

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! This is outrageous. The minister has told a series of untruths that he knows to be untruths and now he is referring to my stupidity.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member will have his opportunity to respond to the allegations of the minister. There is no point of order.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I refer you to standing order 62 and the use of offensive epithets in relation to members of this Assembly. I believe that the phrase used by the Minister for Mines and Energy constitutes an offensive epithet within the meaning of that standing order. My recollection is that the previous sentence uttered by the Minister for Mines and Energy was: 'What is of real concern is that the honourable member was prepared to share the risks arising from his own stupidity'. I believe that the term 'stupidity', in the context of this debate, constitutes an offensive epithet within the meaning of that particular standing order. It certainly contributes nothing to the debate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister shall not reflect on the intelligence of members of the opposition in a derogatory fashion. I ask the minister to select his words carefully.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw the remark about the stupidity of the member for Stuart. However, it was foolish, to say the least, of him to act as he did and endanger innocent members of the public.

Mr Ede: You do not know what I did yet.

Mr COULTER: It comes as no surprise to me that the Chief Inspector of Dangerous Goods has attempted to investigate the allegations made by the member for Stuart and his actions in handing around in paper envelopes samples suspected to be lethal lumps of cyanide, asking other people to find out for themselves what the material might be. The chief inspector has exercised his authority under the dangerous goods legislation in a most responsible way. He has asked the member for information concerning the dangerous occurrence that the member precipitated. Answers to his questions have been superficially provided and a number of questions have been left unanswered, including those relating to precautions taken in the handling of the material by the member and other people. Not only have they been left unanswered, but the honourable member, in correspondence with the chief inspector, has called the inquiry a complete sham. This must be considered an attempt to intimidate a public servant from performing his legitimate duties.

Mr Ede: What about my legitimate duties?

Mr COULTER: He has suggested that the chief inspector is in danger of placing himself in contempt of parliament by virtue of his inquiries. The chief inspector is still trying to obtain answers to the questions asked of the member for Stuart. I would urge the member to show, albeit at this late stage, some sign of responsibility in dealing with this. His attempt to discredit this government's resolve to administer new legislation controlling safety issues in the handling and transport of dangerous goods in our community has gone beyond what is reasonable.

I trust that some of my earlier comments have drawn attention to the progress being made by officers of my department and to their prompt action to resolve a specific safety problem resulting from the recent Barrow Creek accident. As for his accusations that the samples he possessed could not be analysed, the fact is that the dangerous goods branch has equipment in Alice Springs and Darwin for spot-check analysis of toxic gases.

Mr Ede: In that case, why did it say it did not?

Mr COULTER: The equipment can be used to check whether cyanides are present in samples of pellets as well. If the member had brought the samples to the Industrial Safety Division instead of hawking them around the town, he would have been told that they could have been tested and also that they could have been forwarded to Darwin for detailed analysis.

Mr Ede: So why did it refuse to accept them?

Mr COULTER: I express my extreme disappointment at the actions of the member for Stuart and the way in which his inexcusable foolishness in search of publicity endangered not only his own life, but also threatened the health and safety of others. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, this is absolutely outrageous. The Minister for Mines and Energy has concocted the most peculiar mixture of what can only be termed absolute codswallop, bundled it together and thrown it on the floor of this Assembly. While he was speaking, he made a remark which was not in his written speech. It was one of those ad lib comments he has the unfortunate habit of making when he gets carried away with a subject, forgets to follow his minders and starts attempting to think for himself. He stated that I sent the Chief Inspector of Dangerous Goods an envelope full of sodium cyanide. That is absolutely outrageous. If I had done so, I would have very justifiably been criticised. Anybody who sends anything like that through the mail would have been in error.

Mr Hatton: You sent it to the press.

Mr EDE: I most certainly did not, and the minister has absolutely no grounds for suggesting that I did. I find it outrageous that he should make that suggestion in the Assembly.

Mr Hatton: Did you hand deliver it?

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not distribute it freely amongst the public in Alice Springs, as the minister stated. I advised 1 member of the print media and 1 member of the radio media that I had found some substances. I told them what I believed it could be and I suggested that they take it down to the Department of Mines and Energy because I had very serious doubts that



the department would take any action on it. It was extremely necessary because, to my knowledge, the Dangerous Goods Act to date has not provided anything like the degree of protection that I believe that it should give to the people of the Northern Territory.

I have raised concerns about safety in relation to dangerous goods and the inability of the Department of Mines and Energy to consider those matters and deal seriously with them. I do not resile one iota from the fact that I involved the press in this particular exercise. By using every means in my power, I am attempting to bring pressure to bear on this government so that it realises that the cartage of dangerous goods is a serious matter. It is absolutely essential that we have a fully operational, functional, effective and workable act on which the people of the Northern Territory can rely explicitly as their safeguard in relation to the carriage of dangerous goods.

My worries have been highlighted by my concern in relation to the proposal for a toxic waste disposal facility at Tennant Creek. However, whether that facility eventuates or not, we still require dangerous goods legislation which provides proper safeguards. As I said earlier, it is the second time that such a spill has occurred in my electorate. If spills of this kind continue to occur, there is a prima facie case to be made that there are deficiencies in the act.

I wish to make a point in relation to the minister's statement. He sought leave to table the accident report itself. It has not yet been circulated, nor have I been provided with a copy of it. That is the item that I wish to get my hands on because many questions need to be asked in relation to the operation of the act and the effectiveness of the powers of the Chief Inspector of Dangerous Goods. I will go into those in more detail later. However, I suppose we should be grateful for the small mercy of receiving a copy of the minister's statement during the course of question time.

I now wish to address a couple of points regarding the spillage itself. The minister did not mention these matters in his speech but I believe they will make it obvious to all members just how important and dangerous this particular accident was. The minister said that the drums split open and some white cyanide spillage was spread across the surface and edge of the roadway. The amount involved was quite substantial. I have been advised that not only was the amount substantial but that the position of the vehicle in relation to the cyanide was most important. I would like to have the accident report in front of me so that I could confirm this, but I was told that the truck actually jack-knifed and the cyanide spill went underneath it, with the vehicle coming to rest with the batteries above the cyanide pellets. The addition of water to sodium cyanide produces a very strong alkaline solution. When acid makes contact with sodium cyanide, a gas is given off. It is the gas which is used in ...

Mr Dondas: Executions.

Mr EDE: Thank you. It is used in executions in parts of the United States. In fact, I believe it is called Cyclon B, and it was used to ensure that many millions of Jewish people are not alive today.

The Barrow Creek incident was a particularly dangerous one. Had the accident occurred as the truck passed through Tennant Creek or Alice Springs, it would have created an extremely dangerous situation. However, I have found out that these vehicles are allowed to travel through built-up areas, by day or night, with no particular safeguards provided in relation to their passage.

The vehicles carry no specific warning signs and no limitations are imposed on their speed. In fact, if the people concerned obtain licences elsewhere in Australia, they do not require any special Northern Territory licence. Apparently, if the licence was obtained outside the Territory, no action can be taken if a breach of the law is committed here. Basically, it is open slather for anybody who comes up the highway. Northern Territory legislation is effective to a certain extent in the case of goods that come across the Darwin wharfs, but not in relation to goods transported on the highway.

I have also been told about what was done with the broken drums after they were collected. Since my last trip through that area, a number of people have asked about a site west of Warrego where large numbers of flattened drums have been deposited in an area surrounded by levee banks and a 6 ft fence. Several people believe that these are the drums that contained the cyanide. That sounds all very well except that the gate has been broken for many months and there are cattle tracks going in and out of that area that are obviously some months old. Those are the sorts of things that, as far as I know, have not been raised in the report of the Chief Inspector of Dangerous Goods because the minister has not had the grace to provide me with a copy. I hope, however, that he will provide me with one and give me another opportunity to ask questions about his outrageous comments in the Assembly, apart from those I am asking now.

The next point that I wish to draw attention to is in the minister's statement, and it really comes to the crux of the matter. He said that, when I found this material, I should have taken it to the Department of Mines and Energy. Both of the journalists that I gave it to took it to the police who refused to accept it. They took it to the CSIRO and asked the Arid Zone Research Institute for analysis after they had taken it to the Department of Mines and Energy in Alice Springs. The Department of Mines and Energy refused to accept it.

Mr Coulter: Why would it?

Mr EDE: That is exactly the question that I want answered. What was I supposed to do with the material? I could not take it to the Department of Mines and Energy because it says that it will accept these types of goods from public servants only and not from private citizens. I am not a public servant and neither are 95% of the people in my electorate who could have found that material. Neither are more than 50% of the people in Alice Springs who may find material like that on the side of the road. If people find such material near a playground and they are worried about the kids who are playing there, what are they supposed to do? Are they supposed to take the sort of care that I did with it and take it to the Department of Mines and Energy for analysis or are they supposed to leave it there? When they take it there, will they then be threatened with prosecution? Is that what we are saying to anybody who is a decent enough citizen to incur some small element of danger to himself to try to protect the public? Is that what we are saying? That is what has been said to me. It is the most outrageous incident that has happened to me since I came into this Assembly. I find the threats and the intimidation to be absolutely outrageous.

I found this material after I had completed a fairly long tour around my electorate. I had travelled up to Warrego, to Lajamanu and across the Tanami. At the end of 5 fairly long and hard days, I was returning to Alice Springs. As I quite commonly do, I had picked up a number of hitchhikers who were waiting outside Tennant Creek for a lift to Alice Springs. We came past Barrow Creek and they were asking me about the operations of the Northern

Territory government and the various weird and wonderful stories that they had heard about the way it goes about its business. It struck me that we were about to arrive upon a scene which was one of the best examples of the lack of foresight that the Northern Territory government displays in these matters. I told them about it and warned them that they ought to keep away from the area because I did not have complete confidence in the clean-up. One of them did not get out of the car. Two of them got out of the car but kept away from the area while I went over to have a look at the results of the clean-up.

I was staggered when I saw on the ground what I believed at the time were quite probably lumps of sodium cyanide. They were very obviously not pool chlorine. There was a very strong smell of chlorine in the air. However, there were white soap-like lumps scattered around the area and partly embedded in the ground. It looked as though a grader had passed over them in an attempt to grade the area. Possibly, a front-end loader had simply skimmed across the top to pick up what was there and put it in a truck. It had not dug the ground away to a depth which would have enabled the removal of the spilled cyanide.

An old coke bottle was lying beside the road. With some improvised tongs, I picked up a few pieces of cyanide from an area covering about 1 m<sup>2</sup>, placed them in the coke bottle, put a stopper in it and took it back to Alice Springs. I am told that it has been suggested that I did this some weeks beforehand. According to this story, I snuck in there between what is referred to as the primary and the secondary clean-up and grabbed a few lumps of cyanide which I took home to keep for later use. That is absolutely ridiculous. In fact, I was in Darwin at that time. It was some 2 weeks after the event that I found this material.

I have no idea of the degree of degradation or how much cyanide would have been there if I had been at the site 2 weeks earlier. There had been some rain in the area but the material had still not disappeared. It is not good enough to say that it is okay because it is out bush and that nobody will go looking for cyanide. People do tend to look at the scenes of accidents. That accident received considerable publicity in central Australia and it was quite possible that people would have pulled up to see what had happened there. There was cyanide on the ground. What about kids who might get out to play around there?

I have had enough of this cow business. It was not raised with the ABC. It came out in the Centralian Advocate, where my comments were reported - and I would like to find out more about this from the accident report - in relation to a rumour that there had been a leakage from the truck batteries before they were removed from the vicinity of the cyanide, and that a cloud of gas had risen. The reporter asked me whether there was any evidence of that. I said that there was a dead cow about 100 m away, but that it could have been the result of anything. I stand by that statement. The reporter has since resigned from that newspaper, stating that one of his reasons was dissatisfaction with the sub-editors who wrote the story.

The minister obviously believes that I have the same command over the Centralian Advocate that he appears to have over the NT News. I certainly cannot write the Advocate's headlines, although I would sometimes like to. Unfortunately, I do not have that power. You may be interested to know that a reporter who writes a story does not have that power either. They are written by people referred to as subs.

Mr Coulter: You cannot blame him for resigning with people like you delivering stories to him.

Mr EDE: In fact it was a different journalist.

Mr Hatton: A different journalist wrote the story you gave him.

Mr Smith: They were different stories.

Mr EDE: We will talk about it later.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to turn to the subject of the telex. I hope I will be granted some extra time so that I can go through this, because it does raise some very important matters.

Having made the statement to the journalist, having had the journalist attempt to take the materials to the Department of Mines and Energy, having had the department refuse to accept the samples, I then talked further to the press. The press contacted the minister who actually instructed it on the After Eight program to take the sample to the Department of Mines and Energy. On 3 November, the Chief Inspector of Dangerous Goods sent me a telex. I will read parts of it to the Assembly. It begins:

I, Terence Richard McKay, Chief Inspector of Dangerous Goods, in pursuance of regulation 27 of the Dangerous Goods Act, request you to carry out the following actions and also that you provide me with a written statement by 5 November describing in detail the answers to questions A to I set out below.

I arrived in my office on the afternoon of 3 November. I was supposed to answer questions A to I.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The level of background noise in the Chamber has reached a level which I am sure will make it difficult for Hansard. Would honourable members keep their noise to a minimum?

Mr EDE: I was supposed to answer these questions A to I, which contained quite a lot of detail, by 5 November. I was in Darwin at the time, as I said.

I will give a brief description of regulation 27. In brief, it states that the chief inspector may inquire into the circumstances of a dangerous occurrence 'with a view to establishing its cause'. That is the essential element of regulation 27. There was only one dangerous occurrence that I was aware of and that was a very dangerous occurrence. 'Dangerous occurrence' is also defined here and we will go into that later. The dangerous occurrence that I was aware of was the cyanide spill. The chief inspector has the power to inquire into the circumstances of a dangerous occurrence with a view to establishing its cause. Yet in the questions A to I, there was absolutely nothing which, even by the broadest construction, could have been construed as relevant to the cause of the dangerous occurrence, the spill of cyanide. That is what I pointed out in my letter. I stated it in the terms that the minister used: that it was balderdash.

I told the Chief Inspector of Dangerous Goods that, if my construction was correct, I had reason to believe that he was attempting to influence a member of parliament in the course of his duty. As such, he was in danger of

committing a contempt of parliament. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of the letter that I wrote to him, although I believe the minister has a copy in front of him. I described the circumstances in relation to regulation 27(1) and the dangerous occurrence and advised that, if the relationship between those 2 could not be established, the legalistic preamble to his telex and the invocation of regulation 27 was a complete sham with no obvious purpose apart from intimidation. To quote my letter: 'If that is the case, I would draw your attention to the danger of placing yourself in contempt of the parliament through what could be construed as an attempt to influence a member in the carriage of his parliamentary duty'.

Mr Coulter: Shame!

Mr EDE: Obviously, members opposite have not had a chance to look at their new copies of Pettifer. I will refer them to pages 655 and 656 which discuss what has been referred to as the Browne Fitzpatrick case. In this case of privilege, the Committee of Privileges reported to the parliament that Messrs Fitzpatrick and Browne were guilty of a serious breach of privilege because they attempted to influence a member in the course of his duty. They ended up doing 3 months jail for that. I went on to advise the Chief Inspector of Dangerous Goods that there was another dangerous occurrence, apart from the actual spillage.

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

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): I move that an extension of time be granted to the member for Stuart so that he may complete his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, in the short time available to me, I have shown that the clean-up was inadequate. I have said that I wish to get answers about the events surrounding the clean-up. I have demonstrated that the Department of Mines and Energy in Alice Springs was not prepared to accept samples from members of the public, much less analyse them, until we provided a sufficient degree of embarrassment. I have demonstrated the department does not have the facilities to test dangerous goods in Alice Springs. I have demonstrated that there are inadequate legislative and regulatory provisions relating to the carriage of dangerous goods. I have demonstrated that the Department of Mines and Energy does not have adequate procedures for dealing with a major spill in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek or wherever. I have pointed out that the attempts to shut me up will not work.

If the Chief Inspector of Dangerous goods wishes to assert that my actions constituted a dangerous occurrence, that is his business, but let him tell me so. As a member of this parliament, I have the right, and indeed the obligation, to take up matters of this nature and to point out the inadequacies of the legislation and the regulations which are being administered by this government. I have the same right and obligation in regard to my own electorate. Both of those came together in this instance, and I will not be swayed from my duty.

As I demonstrated earlier by my reference to Pettifer, I have a degree of protection. What, however, is the protection for the ordinary, decent person who is worried about health and safety in his community? Is he to be subject to similar threats? Is he to be told to turn a blind eye to failure because some bureaucracy gone mad will get at him? This is a plot worthy of 'Yes Minister' at its most outrageous. We had a very dangerous occurrence which

could have occurred in a populated area and resulted in great loss of life. I have highlighted it in an attempt to ensure that the law and its operation are tightened up. Do the bureaucrats, backed by the minister, take proper note of the problem and try to fix these things up? No way, Mr Deputy Speaker. They use their powers to intimidate. They attempt to divert attention from the major failure by dragging up red herrings that cannot be substantiated. My attempt to expose them has led them to try to make a case against me.

What about the case against the consigner of the goods? What about the people who caused this massive spillage, the people who used inadequate containers? What about the people who told the driver to drive at night? What about the case against them? I would have thought that that was the substantive issue before us. That is forgotten in the whole hurly-burly of the political angle that the minister has taken in an attempt to turn this issue back against me. That is absolutely ridiculous and is something that the people of the Northern Territory must worry about.

The minister is demonstrating once again the inadequacy of his powers or his unwillingness to act. He is using my efforts as a blind to hide his own failure to act against those people who were responsible for this major spill. He has already had one earlier incident in my electorate. It was nowhere near Ti Tree Gap, by the way; I do not know where he got that from. It demonstrates his ignorance and his lack of interest in this particular subject. He has turned a blind eye to the people who perpetrated this outrageous and extremely dangerous incident and has moved against myself, the person who has raised this matter in an effort to bring about changes to the regulations and, hopefully, enable him to do a better job in future. Is the minister giving a message to the honest, civic-minded citizen? He says that he is. I am happy to hear that because people need to hear it. They need to know. Is he giving them the message that they should not carry out the natural actions of civic-minded persons by attempting to take some of this material to be tested? We know that the Department of Mines and Energy in Alice Springs would have refused to accept it. It said that it would not accept such goods from members of the public.

Of course, if I had taken the substance to the department, there is every possibility that it would have been accepted because I am a shadow minister. But the average, civic-minded citizen would not have been able to have the substance tested to determine whether it was dangerous or not. That is the substantive argument that I have been trying to get through the heads of the people opposite. We know that the department will not accept such samples because 2 separate people attempted to get it to accept goods which they thought to be dangerous. Are civic-minded citizens to be threatened by the fear of prosecution to deter them from trying to identify goods which they suspect to be dangerous? That question remains to be answered and the minister must answer it.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I wish to say that, if I found what I thought to be dangerous goods which had been left lying on the ground with the full cognisance of a departmental head or government representative, I would have acted in precisely the same way as the member for Stuart. The member for Stuart has elevated the level of this debate, and I make no bones about the fact that I would have investigated whether there was a possibility of instigating proceedings for criminal negligence against people who allowed this material to be left lying around.

I believe there is a case to be brought against this sneering, arrogant, would-be, could-be minister, who has just lectured us, for his criminal

neglect of the citizens of the Northern Territory on a public highway. He has already admitted that the substance was highly dangerous. Nevertheless, it was permitted to remain there. From what I have heard, the site was not even signposted to give an indication that the substance was there. I am afraid that I would have done a lot more than the member for Stuart has. I believe he has acted with admirable restraint and, if the same matter had occurred in my electorate, I can assure you that I would have sought to take even further action.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION  
Peace and Nuclear Disarmament

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move:

That this Assembly will:

- (1) do all in its power to further the aims of the International Year of Peace;
- (2) work wherever possible for balanced nuclear disarmament; and
- (3) critically assess the role of the Territory and federal governments in any programs or activities which might work against such objectives.

With respect to the first section of the motion, I think it is worth while to draw the attention of honourable members to the aims of the International Year of Peace as enunciated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, although such universal gestures are not quite so fashionable as they were when the United Nations was first formed in 1945. Members will no doubt recall that the first Secretary-General of the United Nations was an Australian, the late Bert Evatt, eminent jurist and politician. I think it is worth pausing for a moment to reflect on the sort of ideals that the United Nations stood for, emerging as it did from the crucible of the Second World War. Now, 40 years later, we have become somewhat inured to the politicisation of various aspects of the deliberations of the United Nations. I do not think that, even in these straitened times, we should entirely ignore what might strike some as rather idealistic expectations. Rather, we should work to see some of those ideals brought to fruition to whatever extent is within our power. That is why I have moved this motion for discussion on this general business day.

I would like to apprise honourable members of the aims of the United Nations statement of objectives for the International Year of Peace. I quote:

- (a) To stimulate concerted and effective action by the United Nations, its member states, inter-government and non-government organisations, educational, cultural and academic institutions and the media in promoting peace, international security and cooperation on the basis of the charter of the United Nations, and the resolution of conflict by peaceful means.
- (b) To strengthen the United Nations as the principal international system devoted to the promotion and maintenance of peace, to urge member states to renew their commitment to the principles of the charter and to implement these principles effectively, to

enhance the effectiveness of the Security Council in fulfilling its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and the peaceful settlement of disputes, to increase public awareness and support for United Nations activities.

- (c) To focus attention and encourage reflection on the basic requirements of peace in the contemporary world, in particular: the interrelationships of peace and development and social progress, security, national independence and justice, disarmament and the prevention of nuclear catastrophe as essential elements of peace; the exercise of human rights and freedom as an essential element of peace; the role of international cooperation, dialogue, mutual understanding and trust in the maintenance of peace, with the involvement of governments, parliaments and non-governmental organisations; preparation for life in peace, a process in which education, science, culture, religion and the mass media play important roles and which requires effective participation of various social groups especially women, youth, elderly, war veterans and professionals; and, peace as a requirement for the satisfaction of such human needs as food, shelter, health, education, labour and the environment.

I am quite sure that those are aims that would be regarded as desirable and laudable by all members of this Assembly. It is my view that the virtues of the International Year of Peace and its objectives should be extolled by this legislature, as they have been extolled by legislatures elsewhere in this country. For example, the South Australian Legislative Assembly has made its gesture towards the International Year of Peace by passing a motion to acknowledge the International Year of Peace. The motion read: 'To acknowledge the International Year of Peace, the House observe one minute's silence after prayers on each sitting day for the remainder of the month'. That exemplifies the bipartisan approach which has been adopted around the country in the International Year of Peace.

The Territory has been no exception to that. The International Year of Peace Committee has arranged various functions to commemorate what is quite clearly an important occasion. Honourable members will recall the Bougainvillea Festival float that was an International Year of Peace gesture. I happened to be in Darwin at the time and I recall seeing that excellent float. The Bahai community has been involved in banner making and colouring projects and has organised a peace forum.

Members will also recall the Inquiry into Peace and Justice in Australia organised by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Australian Council of Churches. I made a submission to the inquiry, as did the member for Stuart. Another function to be organised is the first earth run which I think is to come through Darwin in a few weeks. I am hoping to have a bit of wind left for that myself. There have been promotions at the Darwin Show and I understand that Darwin Institute of Technology students declared a peace day. The United Nations Association in Darwin had a candle-lighting ceremony. I understand that there have been peace parks in the electorates of the members for Leanyer, Berrimah and also, I believe, in Elsey. At Groote Eylandt, the Country Women's Association held a candle-lighting ceremony and the Rotary club had a display tent during the show. Many schools have been involved and I understand that the Northern Territory government is to provide peace awards. It has come to an agreement, recently announced on radio, to



provide peace awards as a recognition of the International Year of Peace. The government and the Chief Minister are to be congratulated on their initiatives in that regard.

There is no doubt that the impact of the International Year of Peace has been pervasive. There has been extensive publicity and no doubt members received among their K-Mart pamphlets a brochure referring to the million minutes of peace and asking people to dedicate a certain amount of time to consider the issues involved and to focus on the spiritual aspect of peace in our own lives and as we would like to see it around the world. In case anyone is under the illusion that the International Year of Peace is some leftist plot, I remind them that this particular brochure has been endorsed by these bastions of the left: K-Mart, Caltex, the Macquarie Network, Progress Press, Sir Laurence Muir, Paul Wilson, Nelson Leong, Finlay Preece, Dooley Buchanan, Clemenger Harvie and the USP Needham Consulting Group. There can be little doubt of the unanimous support for the gestures involved in this year.

It is worth emphasising that the crux of the International Year of Peace is not simply personal and spiritual; it also has a hard edge. There are practical political issues involved with the International Year of Peace, and I believe it is appropriate that we take that aspect into consideration as well. During the lifetime of every member of this Assembly, weapons of war have undergone such profound changes that our attitude to warfare cannot be the same as that of previous generations.

I should point out that, in the International Year of Peace, we have endeavoured to promote a positive definition of peace which goes beyond just the absence of warfare. However, we cannot ignore the extraordinary capacity now available to mankind through modern weapons of war. Since the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in August 1945, the potentialities of human conflict have been so extended that, unlike any other time in human history, mankind now has the capacity to destroy itself. The words themselves barely do credit to the concept. One of the difficulties with the issue of nuclear disarmament is that it is very difficult for any of us to conceive how humankind could be wiped off the face of the planet in a flash. I believe that, even in a small legislature with state-type responsibilities such as ours, it is appropriate to pause once in a while and consider that sort of startling reality.

Mankind has the capacity to destroy itself. Unfortunately, there is no political mechanism on the horizon for preventing such a nuclear catastrophe. There is, therefore, such an element of urgency about the International Year of Peace that every member of this Assembly, every Territorian, every Australian, indeed every human being, must strive to move this world in the direction of peaceful coexistence, not only nationally and internationally but also at the level of personal and social relationships.

The question that we are forced to ask is: what is the Australian involvement, what is the Northern Territory involvement, in this mighty question of the survival of the species, threatened as it is by nuclear catastrophe? I would like to refer to the report of the independent committee of inquiry into nuclear weapons and other consequences of Australian uranium mining. It is entitled: 'Australia and the Nuclear Choice'. I commend its point of view to honourable members. On the one hand, Australia has a long history of involvement in international disarmament forums. It is a member of the United Nations Disarmament Committee and the International Atomic Energy Agency. It was an early signatory to the non-proliferation treaty, but it did not ratify it until 23 January 1973 after the Whitlam Labor government took

office. On the other hand, Australia has been deeply involved in the development and deployment of nuclear arms. It provided uranium for the United Kingdom nuclear deterrent. It was the site for UK nuclear weapons tests. Australia is involved in the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapon systems and it provides bases for nuclear-armed ships and planes and for strategic nuclear command control communications and intelligence for the United States of America. These facilities are located at Cockburn Sound near Perth, near Darwin with the air force base, at Northwest Cape, Pine Gap and other sites. There can be no doubt about the involvement of this country in both sides of the nuclear debate.

Extensive debates have been held in this Assembly about uranium mining, but I have no intention of going over old ground. However, I wish to draw to the attention of honourable members the conclusion of the Ranger uranium inquiry in 1976: 'The nuclear power industry is unintentionally contributing to an increased risk of nuclear war. This is the most serious hazard associated with the industry'. The inquiry also found that 'existing safeguards may provide only an illusion of protection'.

Since that time, Australia has gone ahead and exported uranium. Australian policy is to support the inspection system set up by the non-proliferation treaty and administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency. In addition, Australia has negotiated a series of bilateral safeguard agreements with purchasers of its uranium. The Australian government claims that these safeguards are adequate; the committee finds that they are not. The committee finds that the whole international safeguard system is very much weaker than it was in 1976 and may be on the verge of collapse. The non-proliferation treaty is an agreement aimed at stopping the spread of nuclear weapons. The nuclear weapon countries which have ratified it - the United Kingdom, the USA, and the USSR - have undertaken not to transfer nuclear weapons to any recipient whatsoever. The non-nuclear weapon countries which have ratified it have undertaken not to receive, manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons. This is to stop horizontal proliferation whereby more states acquire nuclear weapons; for example, France and China.

Mr Speaker, I have not introduced any of that material to encourage a partisan debate on the issue. That information is freely available. However, in the context of debate on a motion such as this, it would be inappropriate for us to ignore the issue of the nexus between uranium mining in Australia and the process of nuclear armament around the world.

The other issue of concern to members of this Assembly, particularly those from central Australia, is the presence of the so-called Joint Defence Space Research Facility at Pine Gap. Personally, I am sympathetic to the campaign to close Pine Gap, and I am quite happy to place that on the record. I also wish to place on the record that I trust that that comment will not be taken out of context. I believe that the Pine Gap base is so inextricably interwoven with the fabric of the United States' nuclear capability that it is a very difficult question to work out at what point we should start unpicking the fabric of that nuclear umbrella. I do not suggest that that issue should be ignored in a debate like this. I believe it should be addressed. The realistic concerns that have been expressed with regard to US facilities as part of the super powers' rivalry in this regard are not something which we can just walk past on the other side of the road.

I turn now to the aims of the International Year of Peace and the reference to the interrelationship of peace, development and social progress. I would like to refer to the interrelationship between peace and inequality.

There is a very strong connection between the inadequate distribution of goods and services in the world and the lack of peace. I would draw honourable members' attention to a recently-published book by the former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Willie Brandt, 'Arms and Hunger', in which he discusses the 1980 Independent Commission on International Development Issues, which he chaired. To combat festering underdevelopment, poverty and hunger in the third world, this commission recommended a 5-year plan embracing major transfers of financial assistance, a global food program, new energy policies and structural reforms in the international economic system. In his foreword to 'Arms and Hunger', the former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, a Nobel Peace Prize lawyer, says he is often asked what became of those recommendations. I think this is perhaps the most chilling aspect of this particular book because the conclusion is that precious little has been done and that is the reason for his second book. He adds that it is not being written for experts, as the report written 6 years earlier was.

This time Brandt is going for a mass audience because the appalling spread of human misery since has been due, in significant measure, to the increase in military spending. Military spending has been globally estimated at a trillion dollars per year. That amount would finance about a million Northern Territory budgets. Given the fact that we have the Appropriation Bill before us, I suggest that honourable members bear in mind that fairly startling statistic. That should give some pause for consideration even among those members opposite who may disagree with some of the other comments I have made.

I think it is appropriate that I conclude by returning to the themes that unite us, the themes on which government and opposition can find common ground in support of this motion. To crystallise the objectives of the International Year of Peace, I think I can do little better than read the prayer of St Francis of Assisi which was included in our K-Mart brochure.

Mr Hatton: K-Mart?

Mr BELL: For the benefit of the Chief Minister, who was not here at the start of this debate, I am happy to pass him my copy of the brochure. I am not sure whether it achieved great circulation in Nightcliff but it did in Alice Springs. In conclusion, I think that we can draw together the aspirations of this Assembly and its members on both sides by reading into the record of this Assembly the prayer of St Francis of Assisi:

God, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me know love.  
Where there is injury, pardon.  
Where there is doubt, faith.  
Where there is despair, hope.  
Where there is darkness, light.  
And where there is sadness, joy.  
That I may seek to console rather than to be consoled.  
To understand rather than to be understood.  
To love rather than to be loved.  
For it is in giving that we receive.  
In self-forgetfulness that we find our true selves.  
In forgiving that we are forgiven.  
In dying that we are raised up to life everlasting.  
God, make me an instrument of your peace.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting paragraph 3.

Mr Speaker, I do not know anybody who is not in favour of peace. It is a real motherhood-and-apple-pie concept. Who could possibly oppose it? Only people who are very desperate or mentally disturbed, one would suggest. If this motion by the member for MacDonnell is intended to promote goodwill and understanding between peoples, communities and nations across the world, then it has my full support. I wonder whether he would take into account the notion of free trade between the nations because some of the wars that this world has fought have stemmed from economic needs.

I believe the Japanese entered into the last war due to economic pressures in that they could not obtain markets for their products. They were prevented from selling their products on the world market. I believe the commercial aspects of trade, which involve meeting with people and participating in joint business arrangements, lead to understanding and peace. It is one of the most important areas in which we meet with people.

The honourable member moved that this Assembly 'do all in its power to further the aims of the International Year of Peace'. I approached him yesterday seeking information about the aims involved so that I could study them. Unfortunately, he did not have a copy with him. It would have been nice to have had a copy, but the general gist is motherhood and apple pie and we can basically agree with that. I pricked up my ears when he said that freedom is an integral part of peace. I could not agree more with that because without freedom there is no peace. When freedom is quashed, peace is lost as well.

The second part of the motion refers to working, wherever possible, for balanced nuclear disarmament. One could hardly argue against that. However, to quote the member's own words in another debate yesterday, it could be simply 'reducing complex issues to simplistic statements'. I regret that it is impossible for the world to rid itself of nuclear weapons. The technology is available and I could make a nuclear device if I had the material. It is one of the simplest weapons to make. You can obtain the recipe from any number of available books. You simply need pieces of uranium 235 or a very highly enriched plutonium, 90% or more, in sizes less than the critical mass which is believed to be about 20 pounds. Because the specific gravity of uranium is something like 20, a pound of water, roughly the size of a pound of butter, would be the critical mass. You need pieces smaller than that but collectively more. You need to bring them together for a millionth of a second. You could not possibly pick them up physically and push them together because the radiation pressure would push you apart. You would also be rather badly radiated if you tried such a process. Of course, that is one of the reasons why a nuclear power plant cannot blow up as a nuclear device; the radiation pressure is too great. Dynamite is used to blow the pieces together. The technology is available. Members may not have heard of it but plenty of people have. Whilst the technology is available, there will also be the chance of someone obtaining the material and making a nuclear device.

Let us not kid ourselves that we will live in a nuclear-free world. We might as well accept the unfortunate reality. What we have to accept is that we live in a nuclear world and we must work to make it safer. I agree with the honourable member that, since atomic bombs were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, nuclear weapons have certainly changed the attitude of the world to warfare. They are not the only things that should worry us. We should worry very much about germ warfare and chemical warfare. I remember a health lecture at the Adelaide Teachers College in which a gentleman told us about concentrated poison from botulism. It is a fairly common bacteria which, when it processes its food with oxygen, produces harmless waste materials. When it

does that without oxygen, it produces a poison. A single cup of that poison in a reservoir could wipe out everybody who drank from it. There are some pretty nasty things around. Maybe I should not say these things because it might depress people. However, these are realities and they will not go away. We should be concerned about them as well.

When the honourable member began his speech, I believed that he was genuinely interested in the totality of peace. I support some of the things he said but I certainly do not accept his assessment of the Pine Gap situation in Alice Springs and I will come back to that. Thinking people are concerned that war on a world scale would be devastating. People cannot help but think about those things. It is not easy to move in the right direction so that we can prevent a nuclear war.

Let us turn to the third point which is the subject of my amendment. I was not born until 1941 but I remember a fellow named Neville Chamberlain who, no doubt with the very best of intentions, went around Europe preaching a gospel of peace in our time. He met with the Fuhrer, obtained agreement with him and preached the message of peace. Unfortunately, it takes 2 to make love but it only takes 1 to make war. As we know, the tyrant appeared to be very reasonable while he was preparing for armed conflict behind the scenes. There was 1 voice in the wilderness at that time. A fellow named Churchill was saying: 'Wake up to yourselves. These fellows are preparing for war and we have to arm as well'. His was a voice in the wilderness for a long time.

The Second World War was brought about because of a warped desire not to face up to the realities of human nature. I believe that, if Hitler had known that there were forces opposed to him which could match his own capability, maybe we would have had another 6 million Jews and their descendants in this world today along with a whole host of people, including many Australians, who gave their lives in that war to overcome the tyrant. As Churchill said, unless you are prepared to face a tyrant and oppose him with words, you may well find that you have to oppose him with arms. If you do not have the courage to oppose him with arms, then you may reach a position where the attempt at armed resistance is virtually futile and your freedom will be gone. Peace without freedom is not peace at all.

The appeasement that Chamberlain promoted in Europe had a great deal to do with the outbreak of the Second World War. I am not a person who accepts peace at any price. I am peaceable by nature and I believe the vast majority of people in all countries are peaceable by nature. I do not see any advantage in getting into war. However, there comes a stage when you must say that enough is enough and peace at any price is not acceptable. In fact, it is a recipe for disaster.

The third paragraph of the motion reads: 'critically assess the role of the Territory and federal governments in any programs or activities which might work against such objectives'. It is pretty clear to me, from what the honourable member said, that this is influenced by the peace group movements from Alice Springs and, no doubt, their cohorts who visited Canberra. A number of the women who had been in Alice Springs last year went to Canberra, where the rest of the world could see them. I pity their behaviour. They did nothing to bring any credit upon themselves and I am certain they did more harm to their cause and the cause of peace. The decent people of this country saw them for what they are: rent-a-crowd, trying to oppose the presence of our allies in this country. I count the United States as an ally. Obviously, the member for MacDonnell does not, judging by what he has said. It is the first time I have actually heard him openly state that he is against the

so-called joint defence base. I believe that that base is very much a joint defence base. When Gough Whitlam, before he became Prime Minister, said he would close Pine Gap, he no doubt won a few of those leftie votes which the present Prime Minister is trying to win on the Kakadu issue. However, when he became Prime Minister, he went to Pine Gap and was briefed on it. To his credit, he said that he believed the base's role was in Australia's interest.

Hon Bill Hayden, as Leader of the Opposition in the Fraser years, also went to Pine Gap in the early 1980s. I do not know the exact date, but I do remember that he went out there. Members of the media were at the gate and Bill Hayden went in with the present Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Lionel Bowen. They were given a full briefing and a press conference was held afterwards. Mr Hayden also said that he believed that the activities of the base were in Australia's best interests. It was reported to me that a certain gentleman in the crowd was heard to say: 'They have brainwashed him'. It had supposedly taken 3 hours for a potential Labor Prime Minister, who did not achieve that office because Mr Hawke stuck his knife in his back, to be brainwashed. It supposedly happened to Mr Bowen also even though he is a pretty astute gentleman who asked some very intelligent and probing questions.

The gentleman who made the remark about brainwashing was none other than our famous John Who. We all know whom I am talking about. Let us get it on the record. It was Mr John Reeves, president of the Northern Territory ALP, the lamb whom Uncle Nick will slaughter at the next election, bless his heart. I am greatly encouraged when eminent people of a political persuasion different from my own visit the Pine Gap facility and tell me that they believe it is in Australia's best interests. There is considerable information available about Pine Gap. You can find it in the House of Representatives Hansard and the statements of ministers over the years, particularly Ministers of Defence. These give a fairly good insight into what goes on there and the fact that it is in Australia's interest.

I oppose those people who want to persuade Australians that, if we have nothing to do with these Americans, we will not become a nuclear target. That is the message that they put over. They do not say that they really want to divide the alliances and weaken our position with our allies. No doubt, they delighted over the stand of the New Zealand and its effects in terms of the breaking down of ANZUS. I believe their motives are very political and dangerous. They would undermine the security of our country. If the Russians dropped a nuclear device on Pine Gap, it would obviously be the start of World War III, which none of us would have much chance of surviving. The Russians are on record as saying that places like Pine Gap allow the United States to see what the Russians are doing. The Russians also have similar bases to see what the United States is doing.

That reminds me of a story, which I often tell, about a high noon situation with a difference. Mr Speaker, it is as though you and I were standing in the middle of a street wearing concrete boots. We cannot run away. We both have weapons and, if I fire mine, you are going to be dead. However, the bullet that I fire from my weapon will take from 20 to 90 minutes to reach its target. I am not going to pull my trigger because you have your weapon also. Your bullet will also take a long time to arrive but, once fired, it is on its way. I have time to fire back. It would be stupid of either of us to fire. If we took away our Pine Gaps, it would be like putting on a blindfold. Neither of us would know whether the other had pulled his trigger. That is the frighteningly important role of Pine Gap.

I believe, as do the people who work at Pine Gap, who obviously cannot tell me anything of great significance because they are prevented by the Official Secrets Act, that it makes a major contribution to peace. The Australian and American chiefs at the base over the years have been very sane and very responsible people who take their jobs very seriously. One of them said to me: 'I believe we contribute far more to world peace than those people out there who are trying to divide our nations'.

Mr Bell: I resent that.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: You may resent it to your heart's content, but that is what I believe your motives are, along with the peace groups and other rent-a-crowd ratbag elements who want to divide this country and divide us from our allies. If you were reasonable in your attitude, I would be reasonable in mine.

Mr Bell: Just be done with it and call us all traitors, Denis.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: You used the term. If it fits, you wear it. It is your term and you are welcome to it.

I believe that those of us who support a democratic system are interested in freedom as well as peace. These will be far better served by alliances with people of like mind. I fully support the Pine Gap base and our alliance with the United States, not as an unthinking alliance, but one in which we are not backward in speaking if we disagree about certain actions of our ally. It is an alliance in which we have responsibilities as well as privileges. It is very easy for us to say that we want all the advantages of an ANZUS treaty, but we are not prepared to do our bit and take on the responsibilities which go with it. I therefore oppose point 3 of the member's motion.

In conclusion, I had the privilege of delivering an address in Alice Springs on Anzac Day. On that occasion I read some poetry written by Bill Mitchell, state President of the World Freedom League, for World Freedom Day in 1984. I believe it is very pungent and very important. It summarises my belief that peace without freedom is not peace at all. It is entitled 'For Peace and Freedom':

How many born to freedom know the cost,  
How many know that freedom is not free,  
How many care if freedom is kept or lost,  
To keep it who is willing to pay the fee?  
How many minds are sharp to freedom's danger,  
How many hearts beat strong at freedom's call,  
How many turn from freedom as a stranger,  
And cowardly close their eyes to freedom's fall?  
These are the questions testing our tomorrows.  
How we respond will shape the years to come.  
Will we stand tall and strong mid strains and sorrows  
And resolutely march to freedom's drum?  
It is our task to check the tyrant's stride,  
And bring the world to peace on freedom's side.

Mr EDE (STUART): Mr Speaker, I do not intend to discuss what the previous speaker said - I will leave that to the member for MacDonnell - except to point out that he proposed an amendment, but did not speak to the amendment at all. We did not hear one word as to why that amendment should be supported. Presumably, there is no reason to support it.

The International Year of Peace has been a year in which the threat of nuclear war has not diminished. Hostilities and minor wars are still increasing and terrorism has become a daily event. The vexing question of arms control and reduction has not been used by the superpowers as a valid focus of discussion, but has become a means of scoring cheap propaganda points. For a brief moment at Reykjavik, the summit appeared to offer some hope, but that has been dimmed by what I see as the intractability on both sides.

No doubt, Australia does have a role to play in furthering the process of world peace. There have been federal government initiatives, such as the early appointment of an ambassador for disarmament, Mr Richard Butler, and our refusal to play a role in the strategic defence initiative, the star wars concept. I remember having a discussion about that with the previous member for Araluen and we both agreed that it was the most ridiculous concept that had ever been dreamed up. Another initiative was the work of our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Hayden, in the Kampuchean situation. Other examples are the government's efforts in support of a nuclear-free South Pacific and the Peace Awards which acknowledge individuals who have worked hard for peace. Partly in recognition of those efforts, Australia has been elected for a term on the United Nations Security Council.

Nevertheless, despite all of this, the threat is as overwhelming today as it has ever been. Initiatives by countries such as Australia are what is needed because these are the middle powers, the powers that are not locked into nuclear madness. The log-jam in superpower relations needs to be broken. We are all influenced by the state of superpower relations and that vast majority of nations which does not have nuclear weapons needs to say that enough is enough and try to break the mad cycle. Our role must be to seek to bolster those world forces, such as the United Nations, that can play a more universal role.

It is my personal belief that Pine Gap has a role; it has the technical ability to perform a function in the verification of treaties and in monitoring their effectiveness. My policy is to keep Pine Gap open, not to close it. There can be no peace without security. We have to find a way of providing security in another form and an alternative to the balance of terror, the arms race, which has led us to assured mutual destruction and beyond. That is not security and it is no basis for peace.

Facilities such as Pine Gap could prove to be a vital part of a comprehensive network of peace-monitoring stations that could be linked into an international monitoring agency utilising their surveillance capacity to ensure compliance with international treaties. It could advise and give the comfort of security to nations, in the knowledge that the facility was controlled by an international agency under the United Nations and with the information freely available. Each country would then know if, in the words of the previous speaker, the trigger had been pulled. Mutual awareness of such an event would enable the development of a strategy for defence.

By an overwhelming vote of 126 to 9, the United Nations has endorsed the concept of the establishment of an international space monitoring agency. The UN would use a network of satellites to verify and monitor international agreements. A restructured Pine Gap could play a central role in the work of that agency. Today's argument on the role of Pine Gap should be broadened to look at utilisation of its technical facilities and resources in that endeavour. It means that it would no longer be a joint Australian and United States facility, but an international facility controlled by the United Nations through the international satellite monitoring agency.



Such a notion has been called unrealistic, but I believe that we must look at the possibility of obtaining international agreements to put such programs in place. We should not simply pursue the blinkered view that there are no alternatives to the present situation. A majority of 129 countries to 9 agreed that this was a very sensible and workable way to provide security. The famous author and scientist, Arthur C. Clarke, called it 'an idea whose time had come'. The eminent Australian scientist, Sir Mark Oliphant, said:

I suggest that a group of peace-loving nations, not great powers or members of the nuclear club, could get together to launch and operate such satellites, publishing all the results freely to all nations. The primary cause of war is no longer conquest, but fear and suspicion. By creating an open world, without the possibility of secret preparations for war, it might be possible to build a world at peace. The cost would be a very small fraction of the arms race.

His theory was that, if the agreement could not be organised with total United Nations support, then countries such as Australia, which are not members of the nuclear club, could come together themselves and set up what I would like to see called the 'peace force'. It would be a force composed of nations that are working directly for peace by utilising the technology of satellite monitoring to provide a peace blanket for the world. Australia clearly falls into the category of nations that do not belong to the nuclear club. We rejected the nuclear option in the 1960s when we signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. We must do more than pay lip service to international agreements. Australia is an ally of the United States and I believe will remain so, but our primary allegiance must be to a nuclear-free and peaceful world. We must ensure that our primary effort is directed down a track that will become a practical and positive road to peace and security.

I would like to quote from study made by ISMA, the International Satellite Monitoring Agency:

There is a growing feeling amongst states that the existing arms regulation process urgently needs revitalisation and improvement and that the United Nations should play a more active role in the verification of disarmament and arms limitation agreements. In the light of recent developments in the field of arms regulation, the need for institutionalisation of the verification process is becoming increasingly obvious.

Mr Speaker, that is what I am calling for. However, as I said, I would like to explore the possibility that, if the United Nations does not act, Australia and a group of like-minded countries - for example, Austria, Japan, Yugoslavia, and Sweden - could come together and do this on their own. Some ideas were put together by a group in America that called itself War Control Planners Incorporated. It was set up by the Reverend Harriet Kurtz and Lt Col Howard G. Kurtz. They established a group whose primary function was to identify the primary economic and social factors that were working against peace in the world, and to see how they could be attacked so as to remove the causes of war.

One of their friends was Robert Mueller, the Assistant United Nations Secretary-General. He was a French citizen who was a member of a group of creative intellectuals appointed by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in 1975 to report privately to him. They were charged with coming up with bold new world initiatives for France. I am sorry to say that the early hopes we had for those initiatives have not come to fruition. However, I would like to mention

an early initiative they developed because I think it has growing relevance today. It was called the 'Global Information Cooperative'. It was to work on providing free and unfettered information to the countries of the world. The group suggested that this information should extend well beyond weapons verification and monitoring. It suggested that the data collected by orbiting satellites should be pooled and made available to all nations. It would include a variety of information, covering such things as the earth's resources, conditions of the soil, growing rates, rainfall, crop diseases, forestry and crop monitoring. It could be used to spot fires and other dangers. In respect of wildlife, it could keep track of herds and migration patterns and help to protect endangered species. It would have an application for search and rescue, such as spotting life-boats. Explorers in the Arctic or other regions would also link into it, and it could be used for the detection and development of mineral resources as well as being of great assistance in plotting the weather.

The group's argument for bringing all those functions together was quite sound. It is often said that the world depression that followed the Vietnam War was caused by the inability of the world to change from a war-based economy to a peace-based economy. By utilising the capabilities of satellites to look at the earth's resources, and by utilising resources more effectively, this group proposed to make that change. Free information could be provided to allow countries to make changes which would allow them to maintain and increase their economic activity along a pathway to peace rather than a pathway to war involving the maintenance of massive nuclear arsenals and mutually assured destruction.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by pleading with all members to think about peace, talk about peace and work for peace. It has been said that politicians make war and that only people can make peace. We are people as well as politicians and I would like us to resolve that, as politicians, we will prove that we also can work for peace.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the amendment. The International Year of Peace is an appropriate time to comment on a subject of some great interest to the people of Alice Springs: the joint defence facility at Pine Gap. On 6 June 1984, the following comments were made:

Pine Gap contributes to the objectives of timely knowledge of developments that have military significance, effective deterrence and verification of arms limitation agreements. It provides early warning by receiving from space satellites information about the occurrence of nuclear explosions. It operates with the full knowledge and concurrence of the Australian government.

Of course, those comments were made by the Prime Minister of Australia. Despite the member for Stuart's idea to keep Pine Gap open, I noticed that, on 19 October, he marched in a protest against the existence of Pine Gap, seeking to ensure that the lease would not be renewed next year. The member for Stuart thinks he has a lot of support for his stance on Pine Gap but I should remind him that a couple of years ago 8HA, the local radio station in Alice Springs, ran a survey which showed that the residents of Alice Springs outvoted his little group by some 95%.

Yesterday, there was a nonsensical press release on radio in Alice Springs about Pine Gap causing economic hardship to the town because scientists and doctors will not come to work there. What rubbish! The employment of

Australians and Americans at the base contributes immensely to Alice Springs, both socially and economically. No doubt, some members opposite believe that Australia might be able to isolate itself from world conflict by shedding its defence alliances and military installations and by establishing a nuclear-free Pacific. That idea, however superficially attractive, is tragically misconceived. Both defence and scientific opinion is such that there will never be a limited nuclear exchange because it would escalate to the rest of the world very quickly. A nuclear war has no winners, no escape for neutral nations and no escape for nuclear-free zones. An effective peace policy is therefore one that adds to the prevention of a nuclear outbreak. Since the advent of the nuclear powers after World War 2, a world war has been prevented by an uneasy balance between the superpowers and a combination of conventional and nuclear weapons. The removal of Pine Gap or other American bases in Australia could in fact create more instability and actually increase the risk of nuclear war. If lasting peace is to be obtained, that balance must be maintained while armaments are reduced.

The member for Stuart's own federal Minister for Foreign Affairs said in 1983: 'The Pine Gap facilities have a global significance as part of a system of deterrence and verification that makes arms control and reduction feasible. They are an additional reason for us to be an active participant in the search for stability through arms control and disarmament'.

Let me read you some quotes from some fairly well-known people. Mr Yuri Andropov said in 1982: 'Let no one expect a unilateral disarmament from us. We are not a naive people'. The English Defence Minister Dennis Healey said: 'The only real answer to the nuclear threat is multilateral disarmament and not unilateral gestures'. Dr Billy Graham said: 'It has got to be a mutually agreed and verifiable disarmament. I think it would be a disaster for one country to disarm and put themselves at the mercy of the other'.

The Pope sees deterrence as morally tolerable if it is taken as a stage in the movement towards progressive, mutual and verifiable disarmament. The Bishop of London said: 'I believe that the duty of government is both to ensure the survival of the state and to bear witness to the moral basis which is necessary for a free society'. The Nuclear Disarmament Party in Australia said: 'We are not unilateralists. Nuclear weapons need to be dismantled in both the East and the West. There are many different paths to peace. It is not a destination but a process'.

The nuclear armoury of the superpowers has increased immensely in size and destructive power. There are no limited nuclear wars. The first strike must be massive enough to destroy or reduce to a minimum the power of an opponent. World-renowned scientists assert that the magnitude of a first strike would have lethal consequences in every corner of the globe. There is an argument that says dust and debris thrown into the atmosphere would blot out the sun for weeks or months, creating a nuclear winter in which all living things would perish. The concept of a nuclear winter is generally accepted by political parties and peace groups. It means that there is no escape by anyone anywhere in the world once the first missiles are launched, no matter where they are aimed. There is no escape for neutral nations and no protection in so-called nuclear-free zones. No nation, including ours, can opt out of a nuclear war. The absence of foreign military installations or naval vessels offers no protection. The tasks of all nations is to prevent the start of such a war. We have had 40 years of nuclear peace, uneasy fretful years but years that have been free of nuclear war.

I would like to deal with the amendment in both federal and Territory terms. Earlier this year - and this is one of the reasons why I believe we do not need paragraph 3 - the federal opposition was already critically assessing the federal government. It made a statement to the effect that the International Year of Peace should actually be called the International Year of Waste. It identified an amount of \$3m which it believed had been misused under the heading of peace.

Grants to people for nuclear disarmament announced by the government included \$10 000 for a national peace bus tour. A bus has already been purchased for People for Nuclear Disarmament under a government unemployment relief scheme. Other grants include: \$4000 for a Palm Sunday peace rally in Perth; \$1000 for the purchase of video equipment for use by peace groups in Tasmania; \$22 000 for an artist in residence; \$1000 for a peace mural in Gympie; and \$2200 for a special issue of the Common Ground magazine. There were numerous other small grants including: \$14 000 to the Victorian branch of the Movement Against Uranium Mining for a peace sculpture; \$4000 for the nuclear-free and independent civic network's national conference; and \$3000 to the Scientists Against Nuclear Arms for a lecture tour and \$2500 for its community awareness campaign in Queensland.

Union groups received funding. The Victorian Trades Hall Council received \$10 000 for 40 large billboards. The Queensland Teachers Union received \$2260 to fund a booklet and the South Australian United Trades and Labour Council received \$15 000 for 13 union banners on peace. Women's groups funded included the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom which received \$4000 and \$2000 went towards the Junior Media Peace Prize. Tasmanian grants included \$1000 for the Drama for Studio production of the play called 'Frankenstein in Manhattan'. However, the largest expenditure announced so far is \$0.9m which is to be spent on a 2-year advertising campaign by a Melbourne-based advertising agency. I believe there is not much point in having a third paragraph included in this motion because obviously our friends in Canberra in the opposition are already looking after that part of the program for us.

With regard to the Northern Territory, let me say that I deplore the activities of so-called peace groups in Alice Springs which have caused a considerable amount of damage around the town. They have sprayed on fences in Parsons Street and pavements in Todd Street; they have tried to ruin the opening of a brand new building, the Westpac Bank in Todd Street, by writing graffiti on the wall; and they have written on school walls and on a number of community fences that are owned not only by private residents but also by councils. The cost of repairing the damage has been considerable. The majority of people in Alice Springs are totally fed up with the peace movement. Genuine aspirations for peace are welcomed by everybody in this Assembly. The problem, obviously, is that the peace movement has become political. It has been misused financially by the federal government. It is creating untold damage and financial hardship to local residents in Alice Springs. Mr Speaker, I support the amendment.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, the amendment has prompted me to contribute briefly to this debate. The member for Araluen's major concerns are very localised indeed. It seems that the only concern he has is the potential for being blown up by a can of paint.

I must say that, on the face of it, every recipient of federal government funds for promoting peace in the list he just read out seems to be perfectly worthy. If that is the extent to which the federal opposition is reaching in

terms of justifying calling the International Year of Peace the International Year of Waste, I think the ground it is on there is as stony as it is everywhere else. I would have thought that contributing money for the erection of 50 billboards to advertise peace would be a good way to spread the message, as was the provision of funds for an advertising agency to produce the 'Minute of Peace' pamphlets. I would have felt that giving Commonwealth funds to provide prizes and awards for young people to take their own initiatives in promoting peace would be an excellent way of spending taxpayers' money, as are peace murals and peace sculptures. In terms of spreading the message of the International Year of Peace, all are totally commendable ways of spending money. If criticising those expenditures is the best the honourable member can do, then I suggest that he really should not be opposing any part of this motion at all.

The member for Sadadeen spent some time telling us about the concerns of all thinking people concerning peace. He did not tell us what his concerns were. His most significant contribution to the debate then was to advise all members of the Assembly on how to construct a hydrogen bomb. I imagine that we will all take that on board.

Mr D.W. Collins: That is warped.

Mr. B. COLLINS: I would not try and improve on the warped job that has been done on you, Denis.

Mr Speaker, I would like to address members' concerns in respect of paragraph 3 of the motion because I cannot understand why an amendment is necessary to remove it. Nor can I understand how, by any possible stretch of logic or imagination, the member for Sadadeen can make the assertion that paragraph 3 of this motion is a reference to women's groups or other frenetic organisations opposed to Pine Gap. One would have thought that there needs to be critical assessment of anything this Assembly does. We certainly critically assess every piece of legislation that goes through this Assembly and amend it where necessary. I do not know why the honourable member is so terrified of the possibility of critical assessment.

If we are going to support the first 2 parts of the motion, to do all in our power to further the aims of the International Year of Peace and to work wherever possible for balanced nuclear disarmament, one would have thought there could hardly be any objection in this Assembly of supposedly thinking people, to critically assessing how successful or otherwise we are in achieving the first 2 objectives. In debates on such matters, the numbers will ultimately determine the decision. It does no credit to the member or any of his colleagues that they are so concerned that someone might make reference to Pine Gap in a subsequent debate on critical assessment of the first 2 parts of the motion. I would have thought that his shoulders were a little broader than that. In the current Assembly, he has the numbers which can provide the additional safety net he needs to avoid this dreadful business of critical assessment. I see absolutely no reason to delete the action-orientated part of the motion. I would urge all honourable members to support the motion and to defeat the amendment.

Mr SETTER (JINGILI): Mr Speaker, this motion is couched in smooth and appealing tones. We heard them during the first part of the member for MacDonnell's speech. It was designed to lull the government into believing that the opposition's motive is genuine and that it is concerned about the welfare of the people of the Territory. Having listened to him speak about peace for 10 minutes in warm and glowing tones, including the second part of

the motion which refers to working wherever possible for balanced nuclear disarmament, I felt warm and glowing. I thought: 'This is good stuff. I support it'. However, it did not take very long before he trotted out his anti-uranium mining, anti-nuclear and the anti-Pine Gap themes. It was the same old tripe that we have heard from him on so many previous occasions. Let me tell him that he has failed miserably, as have the subsequent speakers, particularly the member for Arafura with his glib tongue and rhetoric.

They do not fool anybody. It is very easy to see through their deceit and to expose it for what it is: a move to make love to the anti-nuclear, anti-uranium peace movements, and an attempt to trap this government into supporting them. It is just not on. There would not be one person here today who does not support peace. This century has witnessed a number of absolutely horrific wars and the world has paid an enormous price in terms of loss of lives and material resources. I hope that in this country we have seen the last of wars and that peace can be maintained in the region forever. When I indicate that I support the maintenance of peace, I hasten to point out that I do not want my support of peace to be confused with support for the peace movement and all its associated trendies and hangers-on.

From the reports I have received, the peace movement has been infiltrated by the Labor left and the communists. Doubtless, there are some genuine people involved with this movement, people who have no political motivation whatsoever. However, I believe they have been used and carried along by the influence of the trendy lefties. If you examine the membership of this organisation, you will find that many of its members are also members of the anti-nuclear movement, the movement against uranium mining, the environmental movement and any other left-wing, anti-American organisation around the place. There is a whole multitude of them. They pop up all over the place. You see letters to paper from time to time from some group that you have never heard of that espouses the same sort of left-wing ideals and ideologies. It is no secret that the Labor Party, both federally and in the Northern Territory, supports the activities of these groups. For example, the Australia Council is a body established by the federal government to launder money from the Commonwealth to all sorts of community groups and others.

In April this year, the Australia Council distributed grants totalling \$210 000 to groups which applied under the heading of International Year of Peace. I will just give some examples from its report entitled 'Australia Council Grants. International Year of Peace'. A couple have already been mentioned, but I will run through some others to bring members' attention to them. The Alexander Cooperative - whatever that might be - in the ACT received \$10 331; the Bombshells - whatever they are - received \$12 600; the Doncaster Movement Against Uranium Mining received \$14 000; the Patch Theatre Centre got \$12 000; the Peace Education Foundation, \$18 000; Redback Graphics, \$10 000; and Toni Robertson, \$22 000. I hope that person is no relation to another famous Robertson with whom we are all familiar. The United Trades and Labour Council of South Australia received \$15 000. The whole lot totals \$210 000, and that is for April alone.

Mr Speaker, in the NT News of 28 April, there was this item:

'The handout of hundreds of thousands of dollars to so-called peace organisations over the Anzac weekend is an insult to most Australians', the federal opposition charged today. A total of \$200 000 was paid to groups such as the Movement Against Uranium Mining and People for Nuclear Disarmament. The head of the Opposition Waste Watch Committee, Senator Baume, said a number of the

groups were involved in campaigns aimed at damaging Australia's alliance with the US.

Mr Speaker, that is what it is all about. The Northern Territory is not exempt from the activities of these groups. In fact, they are present in our community and they spread false information which creates unnecessary worry and concern. They participate in anti-uranium protests and other similar activities. They attempt to prevent uranium shipments, working hand in hand with Greenpeace and others. They are also involved with the movement to close Pine Gap and we have heard from my colleagues about its activities in Alice Springs. Doubtless, as the renewal date for the agreement on Pine Gap comes up next year, we will see a proliferation of these groups in Alice Springs and around Pine Gap.

Let me give some examples of their activities during the past several years. For example, I quote from the Midweek Territorian of 28 October 1984:

A nuclear disarmament declaration with 160 signatures has been presented to the federal member, Mr John Reeves. The declaration calls on the federal government to support disarmament, remove foreign military installations, end visiting rights for nuclear armed and powered vessels and aircraft, support nuclear free zones in the Pacific and Indian Oceans and end the mining and exploration of uranium. The declaration was presented to Mr Reeves by representatives of the NT Peace Council, the NT Environment Centre and Women for Survival. Environment Centre coordinator, Ms Lyn Allen, said the declaration was part of a national campaign to draw the attention of Australians to the dangers inherent in uranium mining and nuclear weapons.

You can see from that where the Peace Council stands in this community.

In more recent times, we read a letter in the NT News from Ms Anne Wharton who is the President of the NT Peace Council. Ms Wharton is the wife of another Peace Council member, Bob Wharton, who happens to be the President of the NT Teachers Federation. Both are left-wing members of the Labor Party and are well known for their radical views and activities. Ms Wharton says in her letter which is headed, 'Peace Group Concerned Over Uranium Sale':

Sir, NT Peace Council members are concerned that federal Cabinet is considering renewing the sale of uranium to France. This is a direct contravention of both Labor Party and government policy. Any action to provide France with the material to construct nuclear weapons must be seen as support for the testing program. Such an act will seriously undermine the credibility of the Australian government, particularly in any forums where Australia speaks out for peace and disarmament. On 8 August, the NT Peace Council handed a letter to Resources and Energy Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, urging him to adhere to government policy and to continue to refuse to sell uranium while it continues testing in the Pacific.

The letter is signed: Anne Wharton, NT Peace Council. Unfortunately for Ms Wharton, she was too late to stop the federal Labor government exporting its uranium to France.

Mr Speaker, let me quote from the Bulletin of 8 October 1985 under the heading of 'Peace Makers Against Alliance'. This is what Anthony McAdam says:

With the rising crescendo of peace activity throughout Australia, 2 points have emerged fairly clearly. The Australian peace movement is overwhelmingly anti-American in its sentiments and focus and, increasingly, it is funded by the Hawke government whose foreign policy is the peace movement's prime target.

There it is in black and white. It would be true to say that the Australian peace movement takes a contentious view on the issues of peace and war. It believes, for example, that the presence of US bases on Australian soil does not help in deterrence therefore making war less likely, but rather that they increase the risks of war. I wholeheartedly disagree.

Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to an article which appeared in The Australian earlier this year. The article was entitled 'The Lies They Tell Our Children' and was written by Greg Sheridan. Let me quote you an extract. He says:

The final area worth mentioning is peace studies. No single subject has ever been as fraudulent in its purpose, as shallow in its scholarship, as biased in its politics or as out of place in a worthwhile school as peace studies.

I will not quote the article in full. Let me just close with this:

The tenor of peace education can be gleaned from the Sam Lewis Peace Prize which the New South Wales Teachers Federation awards and which is officially promoted by the New South Wales Education Department. Sam Lewis was a long-time federation activist also active in the peace movement. An appropriate person to name a peace prize after? Sam Lewis was also for decades a Communist Party member, closely identified with the pro-Soviet factions of the party.

If what I have said earlier does not confirm what sort of people are members of the peace movement, that certainly does.

The number of nuclear weapons existing in the world today and their potential to wreak havoc is well known. Everybody realises the need to reduce and, hopefully, eventually eliminate the need for their existence. I am, however, a realist. Achieving this goal is a very long way off, especially with the mistrust that exists between major nations. While working towards this, one cannot be deceived by the anti-nuclear lobby which would have the western world reduce the numbers of its nuclear weapons while ignoring the Soviet bloc countries.

We must remember the way that British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain was misled by Hitler. I am not trying to steal some of the rhetoric of the member for Sadadeen. I think he must have been looking over my shoulder. We must ensure that we never make this mistake again. We continually hear the same activist groups attack uranium mining even where yellowcake is used in the production of electricity in nuclear power plants. Uranium mined in Australia is sold only to nations with whom the Australian government has concluded bilateral nuclear safeguard agreements and where facilities come under international nuclear safeguards. The Australian Safeguards Office monitors the itinerary of all yellowcake exported from Australia and its 1984-85 annual report reveals that the 2 companies currently producing uranium in the Northern Territory exported 3414 t during that period. The ASO also provides advice to the Commonwealth government on the implementation of nuclear safeguards and contributes to international discussions and progress



in the safeguards area generally. The implementation of adequate levels of physical protection of uranium concentrates, both at the mine site and during the shipments to final overseas destinations, is another important function undertaken by ASO.

The most important single event in the development of the present system of international safeguards was the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The treaty was opened for signature in 1968 and over 120 countries have now attached their signatures to it, including Australia. If the Labor Party in the Northern Territory had its way, all uranium mines would be closed down. However, if this were to occur, then our membership of the nuclear non-proliferation pact would be terminated. Richard Butler, the federal government's nuclear disarmament ambassador to the United Nations speaking in Darwin last year strongly advised against this. Mr Butler indicated that, whilst we continue to mine and export uranium concentrate and remain a member of the pact, we can exercise influence on the policy of member nations. If we withdrew and adopted an isolationist policy, we would lose our input into the activities of this body and our opportunity to influence its decisions. This is what the loonies of the left would have us do, and I want no part of it. I support paragraphs 1 and 2 of the motion and also the amendment to paragraph 3.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I hope to keep my contribution reasonably brief. I have to start off with a confession. I think 'confession' is probably an appropriate word after some of the contributions from the members opposite. My confession is that, this year, I have actually handed out some peace prizes to school children in a competition. I hope this does not cause trouble for the people in the government who were involved. It was a competition jointly organised by the International Year of Peace secretariat in the Northern Territory and the Darwin City Council. Quite clearly, that competition was partially funded by the Northern Territory government.

Obviously, it seems news to some members of the government that the Northern Territory government has contributed quite a sum of money - and I do not know the exact amount - to the International Year of Peace. It should contribute, because peace is a very vital issue. To complain about the federal government giving \$210 000 to peace groups is like saying that, in the International Year of the Disabled, you should not give money to the disabled. It is the same sort of argument. In the International Year of Peace, of course you will give money to peace groups. The important thing is that it is given to a wide and representative range of peace groups, not all of whom the government of the day will agree with. I would have trouble agreeing with some of them because I think they have approached the question of peace in an inappropriate manner, but there are others. The vast majority of them would use that money legitimately and wisely in furthering the cause of peace in the world today. That is what the International Year of Peace is about and it is unfortunate that most of the contributions from members opposite have not picked up that point.

There is almost a generation gap in Australia at present on attitudes to peace. All the polling evidence now indicates that there is a much stronger feeling towards peace amongst the younger age groups than there is amongst people in our age group. Attitudes are changing, and they are changing for the better in my opinion, because of the activities of peace groups over a period of years. I accept that some of the peace groups have acted inappropriately, but the great contribution that the peace movement has made to the world of today is that it is making us all think about the issues

involved in peace. That is something that most of us were not thinking about 10 or 15 years ago. Whether or not we like what the peace movement is doing or how it sometimes goes about it, we are thinking about peace, and that is a significant improvement. That is why the younger people in this country are more concerned about this issue than we have been. The young people have grown up in an environment where peace has been consistently talked about, where the dangers of not living in a peaceful world have been consistently hammered home through the media and by other mechanisms.

Mr Setter: Those of us who lived through World War 2 are not going to be caught unprepared again.

Mr SMITH: The difference between the Second World War and our present situation is that the price we will pay for war has changed quite significantly. World War 2 is not very relevant in the light of the capacity that this world has to blow itself up if it does not pay proper regard to the need to live peacefully.

To return to the handing out of the peace awards, I must say that I was most impressed by the attitude of the children who participated in that competition. There were over 400 entries from throughout the Northern Territory and they all had their own perspectives on what peace means. One of the winning prizes, from a 5-year-old, was: 'To find peace is when your brother stops crying'. I think that says, in a 5-year-old's words, what the rest of us should be looking at as well.

The motion recommends that we do all in our power to further the aims of the International Year of Peace. There seems to be general acceptance that we as an Assembly will support that even though government speakers tended to indicate by their words that they oppose it. Again, there seems to be general agreement that, wherever possible, we will work for balanced nuclear disarmament. Who could disagree? I cannot see how it is possible to support doing all in our power to further the aims of the International Year of Peace without supporting paragraph 3, which is the logical consequence of that. The third paragraph of the motion states that we should critically assess the role of the Territory or federal government in any programs or activities which might work against these objectives. That is the subject of a government amendment. Of course, logic has never been the strong suit of members opposite. I still have not heard a convincing reason why members opposite support the amendment to remove paragraph 3. If we are serious about peace and what we can do in the Northern Territory, we should be encouraging the federal government to critically assess what it does to further the aim of peace in this world.

I will just give you one example of where I think we in the Northern Territory and Australia have fallen down. ANOP polls demonstrate that between 70% and 80% of Australians support a nuclear-free Pacific. That might come as something of a shock to certain members here and they may not believe the polling statistics. Those polls have been done regularly and they demonstrate very high support indeed for the concept of a nuclear-free Pacific. We have not done enough, in my humble view, to persuade the French that, if they want to test nuclear weapons, they ought to do it in their own backyard and not ours.

Mr Coulter: I will have a talk to them on Thursday for you.

Mr SMITH: I hope you do. You might do something useful instead of wasting your time on the other issue that you intend to pursue. The most

significant thing you could do over there is to talk to the French about their continuing nuclear testing program at Moruroa and put the argument to them that, if they are so committed to nuclear testing, they should find a place within their own country to do it. A better argument for the cause of peace, however, is that there is no reason for them to test nuclear weapons anywhere. I hope that the Minister for Mines and Energy takes the opportunity while he is there to make a strong protest. That is perfectly consistent with the motion before us: to do all in our power to further the aims of the International Year of Peace. The Minister for Mines and Energy will be in Paris next week in an official government capacity. On behalf of the Northern Territory, I urge him to take that strong message to the French because I do not think there is anybody in the Northern Territory who would disagree with the view that the French should not be testing nuclear bombs in our backyard.

That is just an example of what we in the Northern Territory can do about creating a more peaceful world if we put our minds to it. It is the reason why paragraph 3 was included in the motion. Paragraph 3 is essentially the action part of the motion. If we leave it out, there is no requirement on this government or the federal government to take any further notice of what we have done today; it would be treated simply as a one-day exercise, and that is not good enough. Peace is something that all of us ought to be working for because it is essential to the survival of the human race. It can be achieved on a basis of mutual support. I was going to use the word 'bipartisan' but it has been overused lately. There is a considerable amount of common ground in the attitudes of the people on the question of peace. It is a matter of sticking to that common ground, and getting on with the job.

Mr Speaker, I welcome the support of the government for the motion. I am disappointed that it wants to omit paragraph 3 which, in my view, will weaken significantly the effect the motion would otherwise have had.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, my remarks this afternoon will be directed generally to the thought of peace. I do not usually speak to this sort of motion, but I feel compelled to on this occasion because I believe I represent the silent majority which usually is not heard speaking about aggressive peace.

I always view with a great deal of cynicism such peace catchphrases as 'world-wide peace' and 'live in peace with one's neighbours'. Whilst I have no argument with the general concept of living in peace with the members of my community and of countries living at peace with each other, I am very suspicious of the motives of those people who push the peace barrow. Historically, the movers of peace motions and the makers of peace statements are usually the least peace-loving people in any community. This is in no way a contradiction of my first statement that I generally agree with the idea of world-wide peace. What is important is how it is implemented.

If one espouses peace, it would be expected in the normal course of events that one would be peace-loving and use peaceful means in pursuit of that goal. But nothing is further from the truth as would be obvious to anybody who reads the newspaper or watches TV, let alone reads books on the subject. It is a fact that peace groups - that is, 'peace' in inverted commas without going into technicolour groups like Greenpeace etc - are some of the most aggressively and actively lawless, one-eyed and generally unpleasant bands of hoodlums in the community, and they are mostly women. That, at least, has been my experience in the Territory. I too am a woman, Mr Speaker, and I want peace. Until now, I have been unable to equate these women and their lawless actions with peace or with myself and with other normal women. After some

thought on the matter, I believe peace is most desirable. We all want peace, but it must be peace on equal terms between peoples, countries and individuals and not on unilateral terms decided by one proponent to the detriment of other proponents. I do not want peace on the other fellow's terms only. I want peace on my own terms as well as his. I do not want peace at any price. I want peace and I am prepared to fight for it.

I believe that I am taking a leaf from the book of the people I have decried, but the media seems to consider them to be the only peace-loving people in the community. As I said, I want peace and I am prepared to fight for it. From here on in, I am prepared to make my views on peace as public as do the members of the peace groups, and to do something about it.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I have a few comments to make in summing up the debate on this motion. The first 2 thoughts that occur to me are that the contributions have been like the parson's egg: very good in parts. Those parts have generally been on this side of the Assembly. The other thought that sprang spontaneously to my mind was that sponsoring this motion on a general business day has dissuaded me from doing a similar thing in the future. Not a single member of the government's frontbench could bring himself to contribute to the motion relating to one of the most important issues of our time. That is quite remarkable.

I wish to place on record that the opposition does not accept the amendment moved by the member for Sadadeen for the reasons that have been stated already. I am particularly opposed to it. Basically, it is essentially illogical to support the first 2 paragraphs of the motion and to oppose the last paragraph. For the benefit of the member for Sadadeen and those of his confreres who supported his amendment, I would say that I am not sure that their understanding of the English language accords with mine. My understanding of the phrase to 'critically assess' means that one is making no assumptions about the outcome of that assessment. The logical fallacy indulged in by the members for Sadadeen and Jingili and, regrettably, the member for Araluen, was to assume that such a critical assessment would involve a particular conclusion. The phrase 'critical assessment' implies no particular conclusion. I trust that they will write that on their hearts and minds and join us in opposing the amendment put forward by the member for Sadadeen.

I do not propose to dwell on the contributions made by opposition members. The member for Stuart offered quite sensible comment about the role of Pine Gap and its capacity for monitoring international arms agreements and how it should be restricted to that role. Unfortunately, the comments made about Pine Gap by the members for Araluen and Sadadeen were not studded with evidence of the same perception. As I said when I moved the motion, I am not going into a lengthy debate about the pros and cons either of uranium mining or of Pine Gap. I do not propose to rehearse the arguments in their entirety. All I will do is mention the issue of uranium mining and the presence of the Joint Defence Space Research Facility and point out their inextricable associations with the placement of nuclear weapons around the globe. I do not believe that it makes sense, and our young people are telling us that it does not make sense, to ignore exactly those associations.

The only point that I will take up is one that really offends me. The conclusion was not drawn by the member for Araluen, and I thank him for that, but by the member for Sadadeen. I certainly do not thank him for it. I refer to the assumption that, because one questions the role of the so-called Joint Defence Base Research Facility, one is somehow being hostile to the United

States and hostile and disloyal to one's own country. I bitterly resent that sort of implication which was clearly contained in the comments of the member for Sadadeen.

Let me just inform honourable members about why that strikes something of a chord with me. As a newly-elected member of this Assembly, I made some opening comments at a peace conference in Easter 1981 in Alice Springs. The following weekend was Anzac Day and, like the member for Sadadeen, I take Anzac Day pretty seriously. I took my kids along to the ceremony only to hear the then Australian defence representative in Alice Springs savagely calumniating people who participated in that peace conference as 'traitors to the country'. So concerned was he that he would not release the text of his speech. The Minister for Defence in the Liberal government of that time said that the Australian defence representative, although he was introduced in that capacity, was speaking in a private capacity. That, of course, was a neat fiction to avoid embarrassment.

I bitterly resent, in the context of debates like this, any assertion that I am acting other than as a loyal Australian concerned about the lives of my family and other Australians now and in the future, because I occasionally look beyond the shores of this country and see, as do we all, glaring inequalities. Hunger, starvation and fear all militate against the million minutes of peace. I can put up with being accused of being a starry-eyed idealist. That is okay. But, when members of this Assembly or anybody else accuses me of being ...

Mr D.W. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I did not accuse the member of anything.

Mr Ede: That is not a point of order. Make a personal explanation at the end of the debate.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The honourable member can make a personal explanation later.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, let me suggest that he refers to tomorrow's Hansard and he will find, quite clearly, the implications that I am talking about and which I bitterly resent.

To return to the substance of the motion ...

Mr Dale: But peacefully. Peacefully.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the Minister for Community Development. It is fairly difficult when irrelevancies such as loyalty to one's country are introduced. However, I will do my best.

I have a deep affection for many US citizens. Like the member for Sadadeen, I have met many American people in Alice Springs. I have played cricket with them, believe it or not. They were brought up on baseball but many of them make a fair fist of playing cricket. I deeply cherish my relationships with them. I really do not see that that is relevant to this debate. I would like to place on record that, if my expressing concerns about Pine Gap were to be interpreted as personal hostility, I would be upset indeed. That is not the point at issue. The point at issue is the role of Pine Gap in the wider context of nuclear armaments. It is a shame that the members for Sadadeen and Araluen did not restrict their comments. They did not even address the issue of the role of the Joint Defence Space Research Facility in that regard.

The member for Sadadeen made a considerable point about freedom. I do not think anybody would disagree with him. Quite clearly, issues of personal freedom are deeply imbedded in the question of working towards a peaceful world. Organisations such as Amnesty International and Prisoners of Conscience are involved with thorny issues indeed. That is one area where I would perhaps endorse the comments of the member for Sadadeen.

To sum up on the issue of Pine Gap, I would like to see the facility not accepted as an immutable fact of life. The only reason I introduced it into this debate and the reason I address it in relation to paragraph 3 of this motion, to critically assess the role of the Territory and federal governments in any program or activities which might work against the objectives of the International Year of Peace, is so that we do understand.

The dismissive comments of the member for Araluen with respect to the International Year of Peace being termed the International Year of Waste will be treated with the contempt they deserve. He mentioned various projects that were being funded and seemed to take exception to the funding of artists in residence. I wonder whether he will take exception to artists in residence at the arts centre from which his electorate takes its name. I somehow doubt it.

Mr Smith: Or the Tourist Commission sponsoring cars at Bathurst when he was the director.

Mr BELL: Yes, that is appropriate.

The reference to graffiti was of course quite gratuitous. I do not think that any government members, and certainly no members on this side of the Assembly, will be lulled into imagining that, by supporting this motion, they will be supporting the placing of any graffiti on any wall in Alice Springs or elsewhere.

Mr Hatton: Graffito?

Mr BELL: Graffito is the singular. That is right.

Mr Dale: This is the lead item on their business day. Fair dinkum.

Mr BELL: I want to make some final comments in relation to peace studies, but I will pick up what the minister ...

Mr Dale: This is it. This is the big day. The 1 in 12, you know.

Mr B. Collins: You have not said anything in this debate. I would shut up if I were you.

Mr BELL: Goodness me. It is quite extraordinary, Mr Speaker, isn't it, how the clowns on the frontbench do not have the intellectual acuity to actually contribute to debate, but ...

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for MacDonnell referred to what he called the 'clowns on the frontbench'. I find those words offensive, and seek that he withdraw them unreservedly.

Mr Ede: It is the best thing we have said about them all day.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I ask the honourable member to withdraw.

Mr BELL: Can I speak to the point of order, Mr Speaker? Clowns anywhere cause me mirth, just like the ones on the frontbench.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will withdraw.

Mr BELL: I withdraw unreservedly.

Mr Speaker, if these blokes want to contribute by way of interjection, it is a real shame they did not contribute when they had an opportunity. They could have had a whole 20 minutes to do that and I really take exception to their interjecting at this stage.

I find the attacks on the concept of peace studies curious. I would say that the curriculae of our schools are filled with many things these days and peace studies ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker. Standing order 55 states that the right of reply is there for a specific purpose and that is for the member moving the motion to comment on matters which have been raised during debate. The honourable member should confine his remarks to matters raised during the debate.

Mr BELL: It was raised. I basically support peace studies. Mr Speaker, I think the members of the government frontbench are a pack of wimps because they would not get up and speak.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I claim to have been misrepresented. Nowhere in my comments today did I suggest that the member for MacDonnell was disloyal to this country. He made the gratuitous remark that he was somehow seen to be a traitor because he did not support Pine Gap. Those words were his, not mine, as he will find when he checks Hansard. I threw them back at him. He commented again and I said that if the cap happens to fit then he should wear it. It was not my implication. It is up to him to judge whether he is loyal or not to this country of ours. I certainly did not imply that he was disloyal.

The Assembly divided (Mr D.W. Collins' amendment):

#### Ayes 18

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

#### Noes 6

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

Mr Tuxworth  
Mr Vale.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

#### MOTION

#### Reference to Standing Orders Committee

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I move that, in view of the raising of the matter of litigation between 2 members of this Assembly on 27 August 1986 by the member for Barkly, who is the plaintiff in the action, and the statements made by the him on the issues of the case and its potential outcome, that the following matter be referred to the Standing Orders Committee: 'The question of the appropriateness or otherwise of raising matters which are sub judice in debate in the Legislative Assembly'.

For the advice of honourable members, can I just say that I am aware that the Leader of the Government Business has circulated an amendment to this motion which I will be supporting. It simply reiterates that the practice relating to sub judice matters in the Assembly should not be varied and that the Speaker, or the Chairman when in the Chair of the committee of the whole, should continue to consider each such matter on its merits when it may arise and then give a ruling thereon. That amendment is perfectly satisfactory to me and I am happy that the practice of the Assembly be continued in that respect.

The reason that I foreshadowed that I would move this motion was simply to place this matter on the Notice Paper because of the gross breach of the sub judice rule which occurred in the Legislative Assembly on that day. We would all concede that there are some grey areas in relation to sub judice matters. We canvassed some of the issues earlier today. There may be some arguable points on whether it is proper for members to raise in this Assembly matters which are before a court. However, it is transcending the boundaries beyond reason when a member of this Assembly uses parliamentary privilege to raise in debate a matter that is the subject of litigation in which he himself is the plaintiff. I might add that it is an action in which the member is the recipient of the considerable favour of having an open cheque on the Northern Territory Treasury to pay for his legal costs. To further compound the matter, he not only canvassed the issue which is the point of litigation, but went on to predict the possible outcome of the case itself.

I do not think that there is a single member of this Assembly who would not agree that that is indeed a gross travesty of the sub judice convention which should govern the behaviour of all members of this Assembly. Having brought the matter to the attention of the Assembly in this way ...

Mr Manzie: Why didn't you do it then?

Mr B. COLLINS: In response to that interjection, the reason that I did not respond to it at the time is twofold.

Firstly, it was because, having breached the convention as he did, the member for Barkly then went on, to my considerable amazement, to name at least one senior member of his own party - the current federal member for the Northern Territory - as the person responsible for his downfall as Chief Minister. I must say that did distract me for just a second. It seemed to distract honourable members opposite for even longer.



The second reason is that I wished to place the matter before the Assembly in a more substantive way than by raising it as a point of order, because of the extent of the gross breach which had occurred. As I said before in response to the Chief Minister's interjection, I do not think it is proper - and the sub judice convention prevents it, as your ruling demonstrated this morning, Mr Speaker - for members to canvass actions which are before courts, particularly once they have been listed for hearing. This applies where members are simply disinterested parties to the action. However, it is going beyond all bounds of propriety when, as in this case, the plaintiff himself canvasses not only the action but the outcome of the case. I said then, and I say it again now, that that was a gross breach of the conventions of this parliament, and I wished to have it placed on the Notice Paper. I have done so and it is the subject for debate now. I agree, however, with the course of action that has been proposed by the Leader of Government Business and, in closing, I indicate to the Assembly that I will be supporting his amendment.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move the following amendment:

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

'this Assembly is of the opinion that the practice relating to sub judice matters should not be varied and that the Speaker, or the Chairman when in the Chair of the committee of the whole, should continue to consider each such matter on its merits when it may arise and then give a ruling thereon'.

Mr Speaker, it is not the intention of the government to debate the issue or speak to the amendment. However, I want to make one observation. I consider that the attention to the business before this Assembly, from both sides of the Assembly, borders on the deplorable. It does nothing for the standing of this Assembly nor its members in the eyes of the general community, and I would request that we pay a little more attention to the proceedings before the Chair.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

#### NORTHERN TERRITORY HERITAGE BILL (Serial 236)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move the bill be now read a second time.

The opposition gave notice in June of this year that it would introduce heritage legislation into the Assembly at its earliest opportunity. We suggested, as a model, a proposal put forward by Mr P.C. James in his review of Northern Territory heritage conservation and control legislation which was presented to the Department of Community Development in November 1979. The legislation before us now, I am unashamed to say, is a direct lift of Mr James' 1979 proposal.

The proposals embodied in the legislation are not radical or in any way novel by Australian standards, but will enable the unification of legislation

dealing with heritage in the Northern Territory. For the edification of honourable members, I would like to state the basic concept behind this bill and go through the relevant sections to highlight the way in which it would work. In every other part of Australia, except among our cousins in the deep north to the east, there is some unifying legislation to protect our national heritage. The National Estate consists of those places which have significance aesthetically, historically, socially or scientifically. These places have value either to us or to future generations. They are places which should be preserved and made available, reflecting our pride in our origins. In the Territory, such places epitomise and preserve our unique culture.

This bill covers the whole Territory and is in the nature of umbrella legislation. It seeks to establish a council with membership drawn from identified interest groups, a style of organisation familiar to this Assembly. We have many such organisations operating in areas of public interest - the Women's Advisory Council, the TAFE Advisory Council and so on.

In part II of the bill, the functions of the council are outlined. They are basically to give recommendations and advice to government. They also give attention to public awareness, training and research as well as administration of places. The primary function, however, is to identify those places that need to be on the register and to manage those places. There are built-in mechanisms for 2-way consultation and cooperation with government departments and instrumentalities. The council is empowered to fulfil its functions without inhibition.

The next part of the bill outlines the membership and constitution of the council. The council is broadly-based and draws on competent and representative expertise in relation to its functions. This part deals with issues such as disclosure of pecuniary interests, meetings and the right to co-opt expertise in certain areas.

The substance of the bill is contained in part IV which relates to the establishment of a register. The register is the legal vehicle for identification and control of places forming part of our heritage. There are clearly identified processes to follow regarding the entry or removal of a place from the register. It protects the rights of the owners and the community, and provides for appeals and investigations. The minister has close involvement in every step of the registration process and has specific powers to remove or enter a place on the register. Also, he may delegate powers to the chairman of the council in the normal way.

The aim of this legislation is to protect the National Estate. It has provision for agreements with owners of places on the register, and such dealings are subject to formal lodgement with the Registrar-General. It also outlines the obligation on ministers and authorities in dealings with or actions affecting places on the register. This provision brings together various other pieces of legislation under this bill and provides the umbrella effect that I mentioned before by allowing the minister, where necessary, to order the modification or curtailment of laws that may apply to places of significance. That means that he may waive certain prescriptions or regulations in the interest of the National Estate as they apply to certain places. In fact, he is given authority to act to ensure preservation as the overriding consideration. Further, the minister has authority to preserve endangered properties and may order repairs or other actions necessary to protect buildings or places. It gives powers of resumption or appropriation where owners fail to comply with orders given under this legislation.

Clauses 40 to 47 define the means to gain permits to excavate. Excavations may not take place without the necessary permits. Embedded in these clauses is the onus on individuals to notify the discovery of relics uncovered during excavation.

Part VIII outlines the offences and penalties that apply under this bill and its regulations. It gives the minister power to prevent despoliation of places, and limits development activities to restoration. The minister may revoke orders made under this part.

Clause 66 defines the liability of directors and employees of corporations and provides the basis for defence in court actions. The minister has the right to enter and inspect, for the purposes of assessment and identification, places which may be eligible for registration, but must give owners required notice and follow certain procedures. It is not a free-ranging right, but carefully protects the rights of property owners.

Clause 56 prescribes the process relating to access and entry. The council, being a public body, shall make public reports, including annual reports, relating to its activities. There are special provisions relating to places located within Aboriginal land. To this end, an Aboriginal advisory committee will be established and close liaison will be effected between the council and this advisory committee. The council is empowered to appoint committees to assist in its deliberations and activities. The council further has the right to engage consultants as it deems fit. The bill provides for the making of appropriate regulations prescribing matters necessary or convenient to the application of this legislation.

The significance of this legislation lies in its concept of bringing together under 1 umbrella the plethora of rules and regulations that now apply. It provides a single means of administering this important area in a professional way, giving due regard to the government's stated objectives of efficiency and effectiveness. To use a now hackneyed phrase, this is the big picture. Certain clauses of the bill, namely clause 38 and the whole of part VII as presented in the original James report and draft bill, are being revised to allow this legislation to conform with our existing bureaucratic processes. Notwithstanding these clauses, we feel this legislation to be of such significance that we have brought it to the Assembly today in substance, even if some details need further attention. I urge all honourable members to support this much-needed bill.

Debate adjourned.

#### MOTION

#### Kormilda and Yirara Colleges

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

- (1) deplores the government's failure to consult adequately with Aboriginal people before instituting major changes at Kormilda and Yirara Colleges; and
- (2) calls upon the government to uphold the traditional commitment of the Australian people to universal quality education.

Taking the first point, there can be no doubt that consultation was inadequate. This morning, I presented a petition from 755 people around the Territory, most of them Aboriginal. The majority are from communities around

central Australia, but they gained support from people right throughout the Territory. I have another batch of petitions here, Mr Speaker. They have been signed by hundreds of other people who inadvertently sent me copies of the petition rather than the original. They are not in a form presentable to this Assembly. The petition was circulated by the NT Teachers Federation and its text stated:

We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned about the Northern Territory Department of Education's decision to discontinue the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate at Yirara College. We call upon the Northern Territory government to provide adequate and appropriate secondary and post-primary education for Aboriginal students, and to continue the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate at Yirara College.

I understand that the federation received an amazing response to that petition and another petition relating to Kormilda College. In my travels within my electorate, I quite often came across people who were taking that petition around to the communities and talking about the issues. In fact, it was quite amazing. I could not go into a community anywhere in my electorate without being confronted immediately with discussion on Yirara and people's reaction to the fact that they would no longer be able to obtain the type of education they had hoped for, and that the changes had taken place without consultation.

People want to be consulted before decisions such as those made by the Minister for Education are taken. Indeed, if he had consulted with them first, he would not have made a complete fool of himself. That is what he did over Kormilda, and he is continuing to do over Yirara. I wonder if the minister yet realises how untenable his position has been and remains. He says that Kormilda has failed and therefore he wants to change it. He says that Yirara has failed and therefore he wants to change it also. But what does he want to change Yirara into? He wants to change it into a carbon copy of Kormilda which he said has failed. If he says Kormilda has failed, why does he want to change Yirara into another Kormilda? Perhaps he intends to change his mind and say the Kormilda actually has been a great success.

We all know that the real truth is that the minister did not do his homework. He did not consult with people before making his decision. He has had to pull back on Kormilda, and I would like to ask why he will not acknowledge how foolish he is being by not allowing the continuation of Junior School Certificate courses at Yirara. His lack of logic in linking the Yirara issue to Kormilda points out how little he has learned since becoming the minister.

The fact is that we were very close to finding a system of secondary education that worked. Yirara was getting close. It was not perfect by any means but it was moving in the right direction. It had some runs on the board which is important. In the past 2 years, 29 of its students had passed the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate. Neither college can match those results. Why will the minister not build on a winner? Why does he take a leap into the dark, into a program which he says has failed? He seems to be frightened of anything different. He says bush children must study in urban schools because everyone else does. No Aboriginal in the Northern Territory, urban or rural, has ever gone right through the standard government system to matriculate. Very few rural Aboriginal children have passed grade 10.

If the systems were reversed and if the pass rates in the non-Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory were anywhere near as bad, even one-tenth

as bad, the government would fall, and rightly so, on that issue alone. It would not be able to get away with saying that it was the community's fault. It would have to look at the system and come up with something that works. Why does this government believe it can get away with the changes it has made at Yirara? It has seen what has happened so far this year with the children sent to Alice Springs High School. We already have the results on the board. The children who were sent to Alice Springs High School lasted roughly a week. What makes the government think that it will be any different next year?

The minister cannot say that the special plans being instituted at Alice Springs High School will make some amazing difference. The plans are a farce and they amount to little more than a room and a counsellor. The government said that it would give all 1987 teachers a 1-week intensive course in teaching in English as a second language. That was to happen in the first half of this term. Big deal. One intensive week is supposed to educate teachers about teaching rural Aboriginal children! It was going to teach them the intricacies of the culture. It was going to make the great leap across the cultural gap. That 1-week course would make them instant experts. What happened to this 1-week intensive course that was to create these instant experts? I am now advised that it was considered such a priority that it was reduced to one and a half days. More than anything else, that shows the lack of dedication of this government. It reduced an inadequate 1-week in-service program to one and a half days. The government thinks it will get out of it by saying that it gave the students the same as it gave to everybody else. That may wash in the short term but it will not succeed, and the minister knows it. He has been told, but he is the puppet of his department just as his predecessor was.

During the last sittings, the minister made the strange statement that twice as many Aboriginal students were boarding interstate as were attending Kormilda and Yirara. The member for MacDonnell will go into the details of that because he raised the question. I just want to touch now on an interjection that I made at the time. I said: 'Where are they coming from?' I obtained a list from the federal Department of Education which shows where those children actually came from because the minister's statement that twice as many students board interstate as go to Kormilda and Yirara sounded quite strange to me, given my knowledge of my electorate.

In fact, 171 ABSEC students are boarding interstate. As the member for MacDonnell will show, that figure in itself will prove how incorrect the minister's remark was. However, he was insinuating that there was a lack of support for Yirara amongst the people who live in its feeder area. The total of 171 ABSEC students boarding interstate can be broken down. There are 28 from Darwin, 29 from Katherine, 11 from Alice Springs and 4 from Tennant Creek. If we disregard those 4 urban areas and have a look at the numbers that are going interstate from the feeder area for Yirara College, we find that there are only 25 students. That is a lot fewer than the 171 that he was referring to. In fact, if my latest information is correct, 8 of the students referred to came from Lajamanu. They were attending school in Warwick, and they have now returned and will be going to Yirara. That means we are down to about 17 Aboriginal students studying interstate from an area which includes the electorates of Barkly, Stuart and MacDonnell. With only 17 students from that area studying interstate, I would not have expected the minister to remark that the students and communities have not shown loyalty to Yirara.

I too am concerned that some students are going interstate rather than taking advantage of the school that is available. I think that, if we have a look at the numbers, we will find that those going interstate are those who do

not come from the more traditional backgrounds. They are people who come from urban areas. That supposition of mine was borne out by the figures.

A meeting, which was attended by the minister, was held at Papunya on 22 October 1986. Even though it is in his electorate, the member for MacDonnell was not invited. I also was not invited despite the fact that a large proportion of the children attending Yirara come from my electorate. As the minister was saying on radio that my public comments, telegrams and information to my electorate were incorrect, one would have thought that he would have provided me with an invitation to attend that meeting so that we could each have put our point of view. We would then have seen whom the FEPPi representatives at the meeting thought was expressing an incorrect view. Of course he was not prepared to do that. He was not prepared to go on stage with me or for me to read out what I said in my telex and to give the facts which supported the veracity of those statements. He hoped that, by excluding myself and the member for MacDonnell, he would be able to pull a snow job on the people.

It was quite strange. As I have said, I was not able to be there but I have been able to obtain some notes from somebody who was there. I have been told that the minister started the meeting basically by referring to a list of goodies. He said the Bachelor College annexe in Alice Springs would be operational by the end of next year. He told them that the RATE program would be extended to all large communities, and that there will be Aboriginalisation of senior positions in Aboriginal schools at Yirrkala and Elcho beginning from next year. It appeared that he was attempting to build up a feeling of goodwill, as if he were Father Christmas.

Some written questions from Yuendumu were handed to the minister. I am told that he attempted to answer the first question but apparently found the rest too difficult. He said they were not relevant. I think the statement he made was that the questions were not valid, which is a cute way out when you wish to avoid any discussion.

The people then asked if secondary education would be made available to Aboriginal children. The minister's reply was: 'Yes, proper secondary education, not like now. It is not worth a cracker. There is no maths and no English at Yirara'. I have been told that the secretary said later that Yirara's Junior Secondary Studies Certificate does not have a proper mathematics course. I have been told that, in replying to questions of this nature, the minister repeatedly denigrated Yirara by stating that it did not provide proper secondary education. In fact, the secretary said: 'We are not taking away something that you have already had. We are giving you something extra'. They were obviously referring to the core subjects at Yirara which are different to those offered in other schools. The fact remains that the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate at Yirara is monitored by Alice Springs High School and is accredited as an academic subject. The same cannot be said for the post-primary concoction that I hear the minister is attempting to work up now.

There seems to have been considerable confusion about the transition class and whether it would continue for 1 or 2 years or whatever. I hope that the minister will clarify that matter in his reply. I hope also that he will tell us what would happen in the case of a child who is determined to pass the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate, but fails to do so. What is to happen if that child does not wish to do post-primary but wants to obtain an academic qualification? What is to happen? My information is that such a child will be forced into post-primary at Yirara or back home if post-primary is

available there. I hope that would not occur because it would undermine everything we have been building in recent years, with older people going back to school and people being able to make a second attempt to obtain their education.

When the discussion phase of the meeting started, it related to the fact that the minister was putting in a Kormilda-type program at Yirara. He stated that Kormilda students at high schools were receiving a full secondary education. He did not tell the meeting that that program had failed. He did not tell the meeting that the option favoured by the teachers at Kormilda is an internal Junior Secondary Studies Certificate course, and they believe their problems could be solved by emulating what has happened at Yirara in the past.

He went on to compound the inaccurate information he was providing about what was to be done at Yirara. Statements were made that Yirara was built as a transitional college rather than a secondary school and that it does not have the facilities to give the students a chance of proper secondary education. The example of science laboratories was used. Mr Speaker, we all know - or at least all opposition members know - that Yirara does have science laboratories and all the facilities necessary to provide the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate.

The minister continually raised one issue on the radio and in the press. He repeatedly stated that there would be full consultation with FEPPi. After a while, when everybody was reacting against him, he started to come back from the idea that there had been full consultation with the community, but he said that FEPPi was the organisation that he consulted with.

At the Papunya meeting, Murray Ryan, who I believe is a fairly senior member of FEPPi and an employee of the federal Department of Education, asked that it be recorded in the minutes that FEPPi was not consulted regarding Yirara. I hope that, when the minister stands up, he will apologise to all the people of the Northern Territory for having led them up the garden path and retract his previous statements that FEPPi was involved. I could go on at length about the inaccuracies that the minister purveyed to the people at Papunya. I think that what I have said is enough and that members will no longer be surprised that neither myself nor the member for MacDonnell was invited because they know that we would not have let him get away with that sort of behaviour.

Mr Speaker, I would like to refer to an answer I received from the minister in reply to a letter I sent him on 19 September asking him for specific answers to a number of queries. I will not have time to go through it in full but I would like to quote from it. He replied to me on 5 November. He is very efficient; it took him only 6 weeks.

He solved 1 problem for me in his second paragraph where he stated that it was not the government's intention to sell Kormilda College but rather to offer a long-term lease over the facility. The only difference I could see in that was that he was handing over control but he was not going to get the money. He then said: 'Your telegram also raised the question of academic programs for students attending Yirara. Yirara will continue to provide post-primary courses'. This matter will be taken up by later speakers but I must say that I am sick of the way the government keeps trying to link academic and post-primary education when we all know that post-primary schooling does not lead to an academic certificate. It is inaccurate to continue to state that the program would provide post-primary education. He

went on to say: 'As from 1987, new students will have to pass entry tests for post-primary and transitional studies'. What if they do not pass?

Mr Manzie: They will go back to school and learn, won't they?

Mr EDE: I hope the minister has that organised because I am told that the teachers believe that, if the students do not pass, that will be the end of it for them. That really makes me worry about our commitment to compulsory education. I wonder if that has gone out the window. I hope that the minister will talk about compulsory education and his commitment to it, and whether it includes the freedom for people to pursue the academic course if that is what they want.

His letter continues: 'You may be assured that the views of FEPI have been taken into account prior to any decisions being made in relation to the future of both Kormilda and Yirara Colleges'. The minister makes statements like that in letters that he writes to me yet FEPI denied that it was consulted on Yirara and asked for that fact to be included in the minutes of the Papunya meeting. A large part of the minister's error on this issue came about because he did not consult. He simply tried to create a charade of consultation and then went ahead with what he was told to do by his department.

I am told that there will not be an option for students to study the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate at Yirara in 1987, and that anyone who wishes to study for the certificate will attend Alice Springs High School. I would have thought that, even if the minister was absolutely adamant that this decision would be rammed through in the face of massive opposition from parents and students in central Australia, he would have at least have allowed it to flow through for existing students. That would have allowed those students who are now in Years 8 and 9 at Yirara to continue there next year in Years 9 and 10, with new students only having to comply with the changed arrangement.

Finally, I want to put to rest once and for all the myth that this was a financial decision and that the changes to Yirara were made to save money. The minister has continually given us figures like \$14 000 and \$17 000 which change all the time. We have never been able to get him to actually table the costs and tell us how they were arrived at and what percentages are fixed costs and what are variable costs.

I asked him about the future of various staff at the college. I went through what he was doing with the cooks, the kitchen hands, the registrars and so on. I found that the changes he is proposing to make had nothing whatsoever to do with providing the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate at Alice Springs High School rather than Yirara. He could make all those changes and still provide the course at Yirara. It was extremely disappointing.

A letter was sent by the principal of Yirara, Mr Ian Reid, acting on behalf of the school's staff, on 19 September 1986. I do not have time to go into it in detail, but it set out very clearly and concisely why Yirara should remain and build upon its achievements and improvements of the last year. The letter points out the successes to date and states that it is not the staff's intention to ask for more resources to be made available for this successful course. The staff was told that it would cost in excess of \$1m to upgrade Yirara to junior secondary school standard, but not what those costs would encompass. They reiterate their intention that they do not wish their course to be of a lower standard than the one at Alice Springs High, and they believe



that they can continue with the JSSC without any additional sums being provided. They believe that Yirara should look at its entrance qualifications and they expect increased standards over the next 2 years. They have some very valuable suggestions about how that could take place. I hope that the minister will have the grace to answer that letter, particularly given that it was sent on 19 September. It is probably outside his time frame.

Other speakers from this side of the Assembly will go into greater detail on the second part of our resolution. I have concentrated deliberately on Yirara and have proven conclusively that consultation was completely inadequate prior to the change being initiated. This Assembly must show its concern by getting behind our motion. We are not saying that the government should return to the previous situation. We are asking it to pursue methods which have been proven to be successful. That is the way to end the stop-go policy in Aboriginal education and to start getting results.

Mr MANZIE (Education): Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory has a real problem and he has just sat down. I found it appalling to listen to his diatribe, and I am certainly going to expose the sort of behaviour he has been guilty of in the last couple of months in relation to this particular matter. The motion talks about the government's failure to consult adequately with Aboriginal people before instituting major changes at Kormilda and Yirara. It then calls on the government to uphold its traditional commitment. The member for Stuart gave his own version of how matters at Yirara should go. He castigated me for not inviting him to a meeting. The meeting was called by FEPPi. It had nothing to do with me; I was invited myself. I find it intolerable that it should be suggested that I should take it upon myself to invite people to someone else's meeting. However, the member believes that Aboriginal people should be manipulated to his own advantage. I am afraid I do not operate like that, and I was certainly not going to invite him to someone else's meeting.

I could propose the following. I could say that the government will start a new secondary school, a school which will be unique. It will be segregated. It will have black students only and will not allow any white students. Its curriculum will be different from normal secondary schools. We will allow it to have a special Junior Secondary Studies Certificate. It will not have as many subjects as the European kids have and the subjects will be simpler. The level of subjects will be such that the certificate that the kids are awarded at the end will not enable them to obtain a job nor will it enable them to move on to Years 11 and 12. If I made that proposal for a school based on colour which set standards lower than those in other schools and provided certificates that were good for nothing, I would be publicly castigated, and deservedly so. I would be in a deplorable situation, but that is what the member for Stuart is actually advocating. I find it unbelievable. I believe that, firstly, Aboriginal students are capable of achieving the same standards as European students and, secondly, I believe they are entitled to the same opportunities. The parents of students at Yirara are rightfully demanding the same opportunities. I find that the member opposite is absolutely unbelievable.

Let us talk about consultation. For a start, nothing has been implemented in relation to these particular colleges. We are talking about adequately consulting Aboriginal people before instituting major changes. There has not been any change, let alone a major change. However, there has been considerable consultation. First of all, Yirara College has been the subject of a great deal of criticism from Aboriginal people during recent years. In 1985, a House of Representatives Select Committee criticised Yirara and

Kormilda. It recommended that both colleges undergo a comprehensive review. I will quote from the Hansard of the Select Committee on Aboriginal Education. On page 18, it says:

It must be pointed out that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs merely wants to draw to the attention of this committee the view and concerns expressed by some of the Aboriginal parents and students of the 2 colleges. Kormilda was established 18 years ago and Yirara was established more than 12 years ago. Neither college has produced a matriculant. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs believes there may be host of factors responsible for the lack of educational outcomes.

On 4 August 1983, Mrs Wendy Ludwig, Northern Territory representative of the National Aboriginal Education Committee, talked to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs about what parents and teachers had told her:

One of them spoke about Kormilda College having no matriculants ever, yet earlier this year I spoke to one of the head teachers at Kormilda and asked how many hours of study those children put in for their matriculation or even in their leaving years. He said that it was perhaps 2 hours a day.

Further, parents of students at Kormilda and Yirara have made repeated complaints to the Secretary of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs concerning the lack of educational outcomes, the attitudes of the colleges and the attitudes acquired by their children after attending the colleges. It is interesting to note the award night address given by the principal of Kormilda, Mr D.G. Parish on 12 October 1984, when he stated:

Parents indicated clearly and almost unanimously that they see the primary reason for attending the college is for them to obtain the highest possible educational level. The educational outcomes remain unchanged over 18 years. The primary aim of the 2 colleges should be the guarantee of literacy and numeracy of all students who have completed their courses. In a modern society like Australia, even traditional Aboriginals need the skills necessary to manage their own affairs; for example, operating the community stores. The other alternative is to transform the existing colleges or parts of them to regional TAFE institutions, specialising in accelerated trade courses.

We might have to look at that, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, the Department of Education examined the operation of Yirara and found that the college was running inefficiently and that the secondary subjects being taught there were inadequate. It was an appalling situation. There were special subjects for what some people, including the member for Stuart, obviously looked upon as special students who are not capable of achieving the same levels as Europeans. That is an abominable thought. It was then decided to restructure the college to increase its efficiency and to ensure that Aboriginal students receive the same quality of education as other Territory students. I find that an admirable aim. There has been extensive consultation with Aboriginal communities to explain the changes and answer any concerns that the parents may have. Departmental officers have been undertaking an extensive tour of Aboriginal communities throughout central Australia. There have been no changes as yet; this is all the result of what has been suggested. The secretary of the department and myself have also

visited other areas, and we attended the FEPI conference last month where the restructuring was debated - but not as the member for Stuart described. He certainly loves to colour all his little bits and pieces. It is surprising that, after the changes had been fully explained, the response was generally favourable.

Why do we need changes? At Yirara we are aiming the changes at 2 areas: improving the efficiency of the college and improving the quality of education for Yirara students. The students at Yirara - and the honourable member raised this - cost the taxpayer more than \$14 000 per year per student. That is more by far than for any other government school except Kormilda. For the past 3 years, students at Yirara have been able to take subjects for the Alice Springs High School Junior Secondary Studies Certificate, but the subjects have been bare bones subjects. As I explained, they do not cover the detail that is being covered by students in urban schools. Very few students have achieved the so-called Yirara JSSC. There were 22 in 1984, 7 last year and 7 are expected to complete it this year.

Mr Bell: What do you mean, 'bare bones subjects'?

Mr MANZIE: I do not think I should have to explain it again. I have been pretty specific. I will talk very slowly for him so he understands. The subject levels are not up to the standard of urban school subjects. The results that the students achieve do not enable them to carry on to Years 11 or 12. Do you understand?

A number of Aboriginal students have been going to Alice Springs high schools. The main problem with putting children from bush communities into urban high schools is that they must be brought up to standard socially as well as academically. Steps are being taken to provide support to students who are academically ready to move into the secondary high school. Students will be able to spend up to 2 years in transition courses at Yirara to bring them up to that level, both academically and socially. In special circumstances, this will be extended to 3 years so that the students can reach a level which will enable them to proceed academically through high school and achieve some meaningful qualifications. There will be special programs for Aboriginal students as well as in-service courses for the high school teachers. I think that the efforts of the member of Stuart to belittle those courses are appalling. Next year, Alice Springs High School will be a junior high school. Student numbers will be smaller and they will be catered for quite well.

Students from communities with existing post-primary facilities will not be able to undertake post-primary courses at Yirara from next year. We are building new post-primary facilities in outlying areas because that is what the communities want. They want educational opportunities in their own communities. If the student moves to Alice Springs, he will be able to attend school in Alice Springs. If he lives in an area where there is a post-primary program, support for him to undertake studies at Yirara will not be forthcoming. Students wishing to attend Yirara will have to pass an entry test qualifying them to undertake either post-primary or transition courses. Again, we are making sure that the places at Yirara are used effectively. If the students who attend there need to be brought up to scratch, they will be brought up to scratch. We will ensure that students get something out of their academic studies and that they are not just wasting taxpayers' money while nobody achieves anything.

The Junior Secondary Studies Certificate subjects that have been running on a trial basis at Yirara will no longer be available there. 14 positions at Yirara have been abolished, 5 have been reclassified and 1 new position has been created. This streamlining will save around \$500 000. I think that is significant.

The member for Stuart has acted atrociously over the Yirara College issue. He sent a telegram containing misleading information to Aboriginal communities throughout central Australia before he checked his facts. I will read the telegram out. This is from a man who purports to be a responsible member of this Assembly. 'The Minister for Education has announced plans to sell Kormilda College in Darwin'. I never mentioned that Kormilda College would be sold; I have not heard of anyone who has mentioned it except the member for Stuart. He had a dream about it and that was good enough for him. You can imagine the effect that that telegram had on people who did not know what was going on.

The next line is a lulu: 'I have been told Yirara will not teach academic stream students from next year. They will be sent to Alice Springs High. If they do not fit in ...'. Does this mean 'fit in' socially or physically? 'If they do not fit in, they will be sent back home if their community has post-primary facilities. A decision on whether to sell Yirara will be made in a year or two'. I wonder where he dreamt that one up. He sent this out to communities, and it caused terrible problems. He went on: 'The minister had no consultation on this subject'. Of course there was no consultation on the subject because there was never any intention to sell Yirara. Of course there was no consultation, you dill, because it was something you dreamt up. I withdraw that, Mr Speaker. Of course there was no consultation because the subject that the honourable member spoke about in his telegram did not exist. There is no intention to sell Yirara.

As a result of his brilliant deduction, this supposedly responsible man created in the minds of people throughout central Australia the fear that their kids would not be able to go to school. The department had to send 16 people out to the communities to tell people that this fear had no basis in fact and that their children could still be educated at Yirara next year. That exercise cost a lot of money and we do not have much money. The member over there does not care; he likes us to waste it. It was a totally irresponsible action by a man who is supposed to be representing people.

His response to a telegram in which I censured him for his irresponsible behaviour was to write to me and ask for details of what was actually happening. After he had told everyone what was happening, he then decided to ask me what was really happening. That is unbelievable. It was an admission that he did not know what he was talking about when he shot his mouth off. It is appalling that he should act like this without any regard for the welfare of the public.

I was amazed to hear him say on talkback radio last month that, if we change Yirara, we will 'condemn Aboriginal people to life as hewers of wood and porters of water'. The stupidity of that allegation staggers me. What the Territory government is doing is upgrading the quality of education for Aboriginal students and the member for Stuart knows that. He must know it. I have tried to explain it; I have written to him. He does not listen. He does not want to know the facts because they might contradict his little game. His claim that improving their education will disadvantage Aboriginal people is completely illogical.

It seems to me that the member for Stuart is a victim of his own paternalistic background. He has spent most of his working life as an administrator or an adviser to the indigenous peoples of both Papua New Guinea and central Australia. It may be that his experience has led him to believe that Aboriginal people are hewers of wood and porters of water. The Territory government certainly does not support that view. We believe that Aboriginal people should be treated in the same way as all Territorians. It is a pity that the member opposite cannot accept that. Obviously, he feels superior to these people and sees himself as some kind of modern-day Moses who will lead them out of the wilderness. People wake up to that sort of behaviour, and people right across central Australia are waking up to the problems this man has caused. I really do not believe that I should say much more except that it is possible that the honourable member is concerned that educated Aboriginal people might not vote for him. That is probably quite true.

Before I move on to Kormilda, I will cover some of the things that the member for MacDonnell accused me of. He accused me of being wrong about the number of Aboriginal secondary school students at Kormilda and Yirara, and so did the honourable member for Stuart. There were 180 Aboriginal students at interstate boarding schools at the start of the year, studying secondary courses. There are currently 171 students undergoing secondary education at interstate religious boarding schools. There is no argument about that. There are fewer than 40 Aboriginal students boarding at Kormilda and undertaking secondary studies. 50 students are undertaking basic studies at Yirara, but only 10 are doing full secondary studies there. It started off as 10, but I think it is down to 8 now - the students from Lajamanu. Therefore, the total number of students undertaking secondary education at either Yirara or Kormilda ...

Mr Ede: That is the wrong school. That is Alice Springs High School.

Mr MANZIE: Listen carefully, because you get it wrong all the time. 50 students are undertaking secondary studies while boarding at Yirara and Kormilda, compared with 170 students undertaking secondary studies at religious boarding colleges interstate. To my mind, that is pretty simple. Obviously, the member for MacDonnell has trouble with arithmetic because I have written to him and he still has a hassle. We know that truth has no relationship to the way the member for Stuart thinks and behaves.

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The question of disguising the matter of accusing members of being liars in this Assembly by saying they are strangers to the truth and so on has been covered in previous rulings from the Chair. Personal reflections on other members of this Assembly are not permitted irrespective of how they are disguised. It is a breach of the standing orders and the suggestion should be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point of order is accepted. The minister shall withdraw comments relating to the honesty of the members for MacDonnell and Stuart.

Mr MANZIE: I withdraw the comments, Mr Deputy Speaker.

What I will say is that the facts in relation to what I was talking about do not relate in any way to the information that either the member for Stuart or the member for MacDonnell presented. There is no correlation.

Last year, the House of Representatives standing committee criticised both Yirara and Kormilda and recommended that their operations be reviewed. I will

not quote from that again. An Education Advisory Council was convened last year to address such issues as student residential accommodation. A further task force was appointed to examine whether the management at Kormilda should be changed. FEPPi was represented on both task forces, as was the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. The task force supported recommendations that the management should be changed, provided expressions of interest only were sought from religious organisations. That was the recommendation made to me.

The government has ensured that all parents and communities have been informed of its intentions in respect of the management of Kormilda. At present, superintendents from the department are visiting Aboriginal communities and talking about proposed changes. FEPPi has been involved very heavily in ensuring that Aboriginal people are informed of all developments, and FEPPi members have visited about 20 communities and will visit more this week.

The Territory government has acted in accordance with the advice of its Aboriginal Consultative Youth Group on Education on all developments concerning Kormilda. I will state categorically that I have not consulted with the ALP. I have not consulted with urban Aboriginal groups, the Aboriginal Task Force or the Uniting Church Women's Resource Centre, nor have I consulted with people like the famous anti-nuclear, anti-mining, pro-greenie family that lives in Alawa that I noticed signed the petition that was presented in the Assembly today. I have used FEPPi and we have consulted with the people who are involved with Kormilda, the traditional Aboriginal people whose children attend the college. I believe they are the appropriate people to talk to, not the members for MacDonnell and Stuart or these other people who have been making a tremendous amount of noise.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Stuart mentioned Mr Murray Ryan. Mr Murray Ryan does not speak for FEPPi. I believe that the chairman of FEPPi is the appropriate person to listen to in terms both of statements and advice.

Mr Ede: Oh, so he is the only one you consulted?

Mr MANZIE: What a marvellous comment from the member for Stuart!

Aboriginal people have been dissatisfied with the performance of Kormilda. We know that, and we are doing something about it. We are doing what the Aboriginal people involved with Kormilda want done. Let us look at what we are doing. Dear oh dear, it is difficult to see what the opposition means when it talks about major changes being made at Kormilda without consultation.

Mr Bell: Giving it away?

Mr MANZIE: There we go again: giving it away. They are totally out of tune with what is happening. Aboriginal people were consulted over a number of years, and the students will not be facing any major changes. Staff will be reduced by 13 with an expected saving of over \$300 000 in salary costs alone. In a full year, the operational expenditure will be reduced. The management of the college will indeed change, but that is conditional, as it always has been, on the existing service for Aboriginal students being retained. That has always been the major point in any change for Kormilda: existing classes and courses will be retained. The only changes will be that there will be more students and an improvement in the quality of the education. Anyone who decries that should be ashamed of himself.

The whole idea is to improve opportunities for Aboriginal students. They have been attending Kormilda for over 18 years, yet there has not been a single matriculant. I find that most disturbing. Until we have Aboriginal people taking their places in the professions, we will not have succeeded in providing them with all the opportunities that are available to others. I, for one, will go out of my way to ensure that we have a situation where Aboriginal people can achieve. If we have to make changes to bring that about, we will make changes. Again, there will be no changes until 1987. There have been no changes at this stage and people are still being consulted. This talk about making changes before consultation is ridiculous. We have not made the changes yet, and there has been a lot of consultation. There have been many problems setting straight the rumours and innuendos that the member for Stuart has spread around the Territory.

As I said at the last sittings, on the advice of the task force, the Education Department approached several religious groups to see if any were interested in taking over Kormilda College. After initial discussions, the Roman Catholic Church, the Uniting Church and the Presbyterian Church were all asked to submit expressions of interest. Following negotiation with these groups, I asked the Presbyterian Church to prepare a submission by 30 September outlining how it would operate the college. Some aspects of that submission did not agree with the government's plans for the college and there were also problems in regard to technical and financial aspects of the church's submission to the federal government for funding. The church also had some problems with its congregation and, although these were not related to Kormilda, it was important to ensure they would not be passed on to the college. For those reasons, the submission was rejected.

Mr Leo: The president of the Darwin branch of the CLP.

Mr MANZIE: No decision was taken until the church presented its submission. The management of Kormilda College is to be transferred to an independent body.

Mr Speaker, I cannot let that remark go by. We have the brilliant member for Nhulunbuy, the intellectual giant of the Assembly, making rude, sly comment and innuendo regarding the president of the Darwin branch of the CLP.

Mr Leo: And one of your consultants.

Mr MANZIE: I find that sort of comment most dishonourable. It is not the remark of an honourable man; it is the remark of somebody who deals in innuendo and slyness. I think that all members of this Assembly expect that sort of behaviour from the member for Nhulunbuy, the bus driver extraordinaire, a man who has done very little for the Assembly or the Territory. Maybe things will improve. Let us hope so.

Mr Leo: Bus driving is an honest profession.

Mr MANZIE: You might have done a better job driving buses than you are doing representing the people of Nhulunbuy.

Mr Leo: I am doing a better job than you are doing in your portfolio.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The chatter across the Chamber is out of hand.

Mr MANZIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

As I said, the management of Kormilda is to be transferred to an independent body. This process will begin next year. There will be an interim governing board which will oversee the transitional arrangements. Details of that board and the final operating concepts will not be known until I have completed full consultation with FEPPi which is presently consulting Aboriginal people in communities about the proposed changes. There will be further discussions with FEPPi when that consultation is finished. Until then, I will not be making any further comments about Kormilda. However, I reiterate that no major change has been made because consultation is still in progress, despite the motion by members opposite. They are a bit early with it. If they had waited till next year, they might have been able to come up with something because then some changes would have been made. In that case, at least one part of the motion might have been current.

The last part of the motion calls on the government to uphold the traditional commitment of the Australian people to universal quality education. Members opposite can only support their motion if they support the changes that we are making at Yirara. What we are doing is providing equal opportunity for Aboriginal students, along the same lines as European students. I will not remain as Minister for Education if I have to have one set of standards for European kids and one set of standards for Aboriginal kids. The curriculum is there. It is a Territory-wide curriculum and all Territory students will have the opportunity to study and succeed with that curriculum. We will not have second-rate education for people with a different coloured skin. In order to support the second part of their own motion, opposition members must support the changes that are proposed for Yirara. We will see just how hypocritical they can be.

Let us look at the universal quality of education in the Territory. The government is committed to providing a University College so Territory children can have the same opportunity as students in the rest of Australia. I believe that is providing universal quality education to all Territory students. Of course, the opposition does not believe in this. It believes we should not have a university here. It is good enough to have the kids reach the end of high school but not to have a university. No, by crikey, that might be bad for them.

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

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the Minister for Education be granted an extension of time to finish his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr MANZIE (Education): The Territory government has maintained levels of funding for schools in real terms. It has maintained staffing levels, despite cutbacks throughout the country. Territory facilities are amongst the best in Australia. \$41m is being spent on capital works this financial year.

Mr B. Collins: You said this yesterday.

Mr Bell: It is a bit much to hear it 2 days in a row, Daryl.

Mr MANZIE: I will say it 100 days in a row because I consider it is important. The member for MacDonnell does not care too much about it. He is a great man for getting up and squeaking, but he does not like to hear of problems which have been brought about by members of his own party.



The student-staff ratios in the Territory are equal to the best in the country in primary schools and marginally better in secondary schools. If anyone refutes that, he will have to eat his words because that is the situation. The Territory is leading Australia in a number of aspects of Aboriginal education, particularly the TAFE open college and the bilingual education program which covers 16 schools and 12 different languages. South Australia and Western Australia each have 1 bilingual school. In Canada and America, our bilingual program is accepted as being the best in the world.

Post-primary facilities are being built and upgraded right throughout the Territory in remote communities and we are making improvements to Yirara and Kormilda to ensure Aboriginal children receive education which is equal to the rest of the Territory. We will make sure of that and, if I cannot do that, I will resign as Minister for Education.

Whereas the Territory government has increased funding, the federal Labor government has cut back on its programs. We are talking about universal quality education. The federal government is refusing to pay TEAS or Abstudy allowance to students at the University College. What a great bit of discrimination that is.

Mr Smith: Because you put it in the wrong place.

Mr MANZIE: This man is unbelievable. The Leader of the Opposition will regret the stand he has taken on this. He is talking about advocating 20 places at the DIT. We are talking about opening a university in February next year with, at this stage, 180 students.

Mr Smith: 180 applicants.

Mr MANZIE: We will wait and see how you go next year, Terry. You will be sorry.

The Territory has funded 16 assistant teacher positions in homeland centres which were funded by the federal government until June this year. The Australian Labor Party did it again. The cuts mean that we will not receive one cent of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' money for education. Where does it go? 50% of traditionally-orientated Aboriginals live in the Territory yet we will not receive one cent of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' funding for education. It is their party that brought this about and members opposite ought to be doing something about it instead of trying to downgrade Aboriginal secondary education.

Apart from capital grants, there has been no significant funding of Aboriginal education in the Territory by the federal Department of Education. These restrictions apply throughout the Territory which has 50% of Australia's traditionally-orientated Aboriginals. What about the fringe benefits tax? It cuts into the Department of Education's budget. I would like to hear from members opposite what they have done about it.

The opposition spokesman for education, the member for Arafura, is leaving the room. He spends more time out of this Assembly than in it. He complains that he does not have enough time. In the last 12 months, he has spent 2 complete days in this Assembly. The rest of the time, he comes in for the morning to do his little bit and disappears after lunch. Do not ask me where he goes, but he is a great performer, isn't he? The people of Arafura will wake up to him in a short time. Maybe he is moving out because he knows they have woken up to him already.

It looks like the fringe benefits tax will cost us \$3m - \$20 000 a school, \$100 a student. How can we ask parents to pay an extra \$100 for every student? Because that money is missing, we are losing out. The federal government has cut funding for additional resources for the English as a second language program by \$30m nationally. It promised to provide support for systems and schools to reflect total practice, including curriculum, teaching and learning styles. What did it do? It stopped the funds that support in-service training. The federal Labor government has done more in the last 12 months to prevent Territory kids from receiving an education equal to other Australians than any government has done at any time to any group of Australians anywhere. This Assembly should deplore the actions of the federal government in making it harder for Territorians to have what is accepted as normal by other Australians: access to quality education.

I reiterate that this government is committed to providing opportunities for all Territorians regardless of where they live, what colour their skins are and what their beliefs are. We will ensure all Territorians have opportunities to reach their full potential in terms of education.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I will be brief. I had intended to contribute in some detail to this debate but I fail to see the point of it.

Mr Manzie: That is right.

Mr B. COLLINS: I must say that the Minister for Education's personal behaviour in this Assembly, which started at the last sittings and continued yesterday and today, is becoming a little difficult to bear.

Mr Speaker, I wish to thank the Leader of Government Business for successfully bringing some degree of sanity, which lasted for a scant hour this afternoon, into this Assembly. It is almost a decade since I first came into this Assembly and, in that time, I have never seen behaviour like that which has occurred in the last 48 hours.

Mr Manzie: I must have got to you.

Mr B. COLLINS: It has been a public spectacle.

You have not got to me because I am too long in the tooth and have been too long in here to worry about things like that. You are still not learning. You are still carrying on.

It has been a public disgrace. The reason I raise it is because it was mentioned to me this morning by some 12-year-old kids outside this Assembly. It is very rarely that they actually say things like that. However, 2 of the children who were in the Assembly this morning said to me that the one thing they had learned from it was that they did not want to be politicians. I am not reserving this criticism for people on the opposite side of the Assembly by any stretch of the imagination. However, I have never before seen performances in this Assembly like those of yesterday and today.

I commend the Leader of Government Business for pulling us all into gear an hour ago. It did work for a short space of time. None of us is impressing anyone at the moment. It is about time we all straightened it out. Interjections are one thing, and we all know that they can add to debate. In fact, they provide a very valuable stimulus to debate because, often, they provoke members into saying things in the spur of the moment that can be useful or otherwise afterwards. However, non-stop running dialogues have been

occurring, particularly from one member of the frontbench opposite, and people have been walking around as if it is the lounge. This afternoon, 2 members were lying back in their chairs chewing their heads off, 1 with his mouth open. I have never seen anything like it.

This morning in question time, members of the frontbench were performing so badly that one of their own ministers had to ask them if they could desist for 2 seconds so that he could finish delivering his answer. This has been going on all day yesterday and today. We are not in our living rooms at home with our feet up watching television. Let me get that across, because I really have had enough of it.

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I would like some clarification of the relevance of the honourable member's remarks.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I ask the member for Arafura to relate his remarks directly to the debate.

Mr B. COLLINS: Absolutely, Mr Speaker. The point of order is well taken. I am glad to see that the honourable member took the gum out of his mouth before he made it.

Mr Speaker, I raised the question of Kormilda College earlier in the sittings in the debate on the Appropriation Bill. It is worth canvassing once again. The member for Stuart outlined in detail his specific concerns in relation to Yirara and it is for that reason that he led the debate today. The aspect that we are particularly concerned about is the effects on Aboriginal people because Yirara and Kormilda College were specifically designed to cater for them.

It does not give anyone any comfort to read the minutes of the meeting at Papunya in terms of the great misinformation that was delivered by the minister under the guise of fact. I would expect that, on educational matters, the minister's statements of alleged fact in future will be taken with a very large grain of salt in that community.

What alarmed me about the Kormilda College situation is not that there are problems with Kormilda College or complaints made about Kormilda College. The whole matter of Aboriginal education in the Northern Territory is so controversial that complaints have been made about it for as long as I have been here, particularly about those 2 major institutions. I say to members opposite that, no matter how efficient a job is done either at Kormilda or Yirara, those complaints will continue. That is because the basic need and aspirations of the Aboriginal people in my community - and I know this is the case in other communities - is to have quality education in the home communities so that children will be able to retain their traditional links and be able to attend business when necessary throughout the year. In other words, they will be able to remain Aboriginal but at the same time equip themselves with the basic skills that will allow them to compete with us on our own ground.

Mr Speaker, I am the first one to concede that providing high schools in remote places with the same diversity in curriculum that is provided for communities of 300 or 400 is simply not achievable. When I was the member for Arnhem, I was asked by European parents to make representations to close down the high school in the electorate. They felt it was providing second-class education and they wanted to have access to the educational allowances that were denied to them because the high school existed. I said that I was not

prepared to do that because I felt that making representations to close down a facility was a pretty regressive step and I did not feel it was a course of action that the government was likely to take. I did not even pursue it.

It is a vexed question because we all know that most parents want to keep their children with them for as long as they can for all kinds of reasons - emotional, educational, spiritual and so on. I know that in most Aboriginal communities that is not achievable and therefore, no matter how good Kormilda becomes or who is managing it, there will always be complaints and dissatisfaction. Of course that is not restricted to Aboriginal schools. I have had the shadow portfolio for education ever since I have been in the Legislative Assembly. I have dealt with numerous complaints from parents about the so-called deficiencies of Northern Territory schools. It is a common problem and a healthy problem. It is a very good thing that parents are preoccupied with the quality or otherwise of the education that their children are getting. I have found in the main that, when those complaints are examined, they have no foundation.

The former Minister for Education and the current minister would probably be familiar with the kind of complaints I am talking about. They follow a pattern that is very familiar: 'Look, I have friends in Sydney and their children of the same age are doing this particular course and they are far more advanced than my child is'. Very often, when those complaints are investigated, you find they have no foundation. The reality is that, so far as the physical facilities are concerned, the Northern Territory has some of the finest schools in Australia. You only have to go to the backblocks, some places in rural New South Wales and rural Queensland, or major urban communities like Sydney and Melbourne to see what I am talking about. Results presently being achieved tell us that a previous problem with lack of excellence in Territory education is rapidly being overcome. The results being achieved by Territory students, including those in Aboriginal schools, are comparable to those being achieved elsewhere in this country.

Never let it be said that complaints should act as the basis for tearing an institution apart. If that were so, we would be tearing down every school in the Northern Territory. If there is one area of public administration where complaints are guaranteed, it is education in which everyone is an instant expert, including members of this Assembly.

The other thing I want to address myself to is the mystical significance attached to matriculation which has absolutely no relevance for a great many people in our community, particularly those who do not intend to go to a tertiary institution. However, some members of this Assembly treat it like some mystical talisman. The Minister for Education said that it was disgraceful indictment of Kormilda that it had never had an Aboriginal matriculant. I am not saying that is a satisfactory situation, but it was put forward as a reason why the whole concept of the school had been a complete failure.

I would like to see every single member of this Legislative Assembly, including the Minister for Education, attempt to pass a matriculation examination. I will guarantee 100% failure. I would like to see some members of this Assembly attempt to pass a comprehension test in Mopsy, Flopsy and Cottontail because there would be some people in here who would fail that. It is truly said by people who have studied at tertiary level that the matriculation examination is probably one of the toughest tests a person will ever have to sit. I can confirm that, because, in many cases, it is all downhill afterwards. I am talking about the relative difficulty of being a

17-year-old under all that stress. Often matriculation is a make-or-break thing with the heavy expectations of your doting parents who are breathing down your neck. Things will be terrible at home if you fail and your career will be in ruins. It is a horrible prospect and the strains on young people sitting for that exam are horrific.

The reality is, and we all know it, that graduates of Kormilda and Yirara are filling almost every identifiable position of authority or positive assistance or public administration in the Aboriginal communities in my electorate. When you start looking around at the town clerks and the people who run the post offices and the airport agencies and so on, they are all old boys and old girls of Kormilda College. I am talking about the non-Catholic sections of my electorate. Indeed, there are a significant number of students from the Tiwi islands who also attend Kormilda.

I am not saying that all is well with Kormilda College. We all know that it is not. As I have said before, Aboriginal parents will continue to make complaints like any other parents. They will agitate until the standard of educational facilities in their own home communities is improved. The minister cannot put that forward as being any excuse whatsoever for the appalling incompetence of the way in which the government handled the whole question of Kormilda College. It was straight out of a 3-ring circus. We had the stunning announcement, a shock announcement for a great many people, that Kormilda College would be handed over to the control of the Presbyterian Church. It was the continuing Presbyterian Church as distinct from the Uniting Church. It was an organisation which had barely existed for 12 months in the Northern Territory.

It was not as if the government was saying that Kormilda College would be handed over to the Catholic school system, which has a long tradition of providing quality education in the Northern Territory, or to the Uniting Church or the Lutheran Church, organisations that have also played a role in the fields of education and administration in the Territory for years. It was to be handed over to an organisation which, until Kormilda was mentioned, was hardly known to exist in the Territory. It was a small, growing congregation of people, some of whom I know personally.

Presbyterians are not renowned as being great Labor supporters. Indeed, one of the senior clergy mentioned to me - and I was very interested to hear this as I had never heard it discussed before - that some Presbyterians regard the Uniting Church as practically heretical, certainly pinko and perhaps even communist. I was told by this senior Presbyterian clergyman that, in a political sense, the Uniting Church was the Labor house of prayer whereas the Presbyterian Church was the National Party house of prayer. This person told me that surveys of Presbyterian congregations in Australia have indicated that about 90% of congregation members tend to be conservative voters. That is no great surprise. The only surprise for me was that the organisation existed at all in the Northern Territory. I was not aware of it.

I hear the member for Sadadeen interjecting. I have said this before in education debates and I will say it again. The greatest contribution that the Labor party has ever made to education services in the Northern Territory was to lose the election in Denis Collins' electorate and get him out of Alice Springs High school into this Assembly where he can do less damage.

A couple of members of the congregation came to me and said: 'We have a bit of a problem. We have a young congregation. We do not have a church. We have been in existence only for 12 months and there are only 40 or 50 of us.'

We are concerned that we have much to do and many priorities but, all of a sudden, the entire congregation seems to exist for the sole purpose of acquiring Kormilda College. What is Kormilda College all about? Why should it be such a preoccupation of the young, growing Presbyterian Church congregation?

It was the members of the congregation, not me, who came out with the phrase 'the gang of 4'. They told me it was a gang of 4 who were trying to drag the congregation into this crazy project by the coat-tails, in league with the Northern Territory government. I am quoting members of the congregation: 'They are in league with the Northern Territory government, acquiring millions of dollars worth of public property on a long-term lease at Kormilda and, before we even have a congregation established, taking over the administration of a major educational institution in the Northern Territory'. I do not think I need any authority for making those statements. It is all on the public record with the subsequent collapse of the congregation, the sacking of its minister, the resignation of the church officials and organist, and the subsequent action of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in sacking the church's administration in the Northern Territory and administering the young congregation from Sydney.

The congregation was in uproar. Many church members left the service in tears on the day that the minister announced that he would resign because he had been pushed into it. This was all for the cold-blooded purpose of acquiring Kormilda College. While the church was collapsing around the government's ears, the Minister for Education must have been getting some very good advice indeed from the people who were acting as his agents in the Presbyterian congregation. They were obviously telling him to hang in there: 'Hang in there, Daryl. Just keep putting out statements saying it is all going to happen. We have it all organised and we will come through in the end. This bloke will go. We have a new bloke lined up who is coming up from New South Wales to take over. We are going to quieten the natives down in the Presbyterian Church. There will be no more hostilities and problems. We are going to sort it out'. The trouble was that the old number cruncher came a big gutser. It did not happen because the Presbyterian Church - with extraordinary rapidity for an organisation which is not renowned for acting quickly - acted with almost lightning speed and sacked a few other people, not the ones who were supposed to be sacked, and installed a new administration.

What completed this shambles on the public record was a statement from the Minister for Education that the changeover to the Presbyterian administration of the church was going ahead. 48 hours later, he announced that an application from the Presbyterian Church to administer Kormilda College had been rejected. What a great piece of Animal Farm politics that was, and it fooled nobody who was close to the action. It certainly did not fool the members of the congregation of the Presbyterian Church.

What I want the minister and the government to do is very simple indeed. I want everybody to go back to square one in the Kormilda debate. I want the government to genuinely search for expressions of interest, not to go through a sham as it did earlier. In respect of that matter, the government could do well to consider the basis of a resolution that I know was recently passed at a Synod meeting of the Uniting Church in the Northern Territory. The basis of that resolution, which indicates the Uniting Church's continuing interest in what happens to Kormilda, is that there could perhaps be an ecumenical approach to the administration of the college. I think that that would be an interesting concept to look at. However, the absolute starting point and main consideration must be that the prime function of that college, as it always has been, is to educate Aboriginal Territorians.

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to have heard the member for Arafura speak in this debate. It is the first time since I have been a minister that he has addressed the issue of Aboriginal education.

Mr B. Collins: Rubbish.

Mr HARRIS: I issued a number of statements in relation to Aboriginal education and, as the opposition spokesman on education, he has not taken part in any of those debates. In fact, he made no contribution to a matter of public importance debate on Aboriginal education last year. Whilst I was Minister for Education, I wanted to hear from the then Leader of the Opposition in relation to the very real problems and concerns that he has in relation to Aboriginal education. I would have liked to have heard those comments before now.

Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that much of what he has said about students being drained off from Kormilda is correct. It is worse at Batchelor College where we are training teachers for Aboriginal communities. We train them and, when they get to the stage where they can go ahead, they are drained off into the community for some other purpose. It is all good for the communities and it helps the Aboriginal people, but it does not help us in terms of providing Aboriginal teachers.

I was most concerned about the the member for Stuart's comments. With all the gobbledegook that he came out with, it is no wonder that people were frightened and there was massive opposition in central Australia. Of course there would be massive opposition when there is talk about selling the colleges and big changes in the school system at Yirara and Kormilda. Let us go back in time a little. The issue of possible changes to Kormilda and Yirara Colleges goes back many years. Kormilda and Yirara were Aboriginal residential colleges and their students attended the high schools in both Alice Springs and Darwin. They were not seen as Aboriginal high schools and post-primary education was also available. Mr Speaker, you must remember that, in those days, post-primary facilities were not available in many of the Aboriginal communities. That situation has changed somewhat today.

In 1983, a survey of parents of Kormilda College students showed that they were in favour of changes taking place. At that time, they were looking at the possibility of opening the college up so that non-Aboriginal students could attend as well. This assists us in catering for isolated people as well. The general view was that the parents were not happy about their children leaving the communities to receive education, and that has been emphasised here today by the member for Arafura.

The member for Stuart commented on that in the past, and I quote from the Hansard of 6 March. We were talking about Batchelor College, but his remarks relate to the general theme: 'The government builds flash institutions and then blames people who do not use them. Communities do not want their young people thousands of miles away'. I agree with those comments. The member for Arafura made that comment again today. There is no doubt that people want education to be carried out in their communities. It was the same in Darwin years ago, and I have been through that. We had to grow in Darwin too. There were not many schools here when I was a student.

People at Yuendumu and Lajamanu also said that they wanted to have education provided in their own communities. They were referring to both secondary and post-primary levels. That appeared in submissions made to House of Representatives committee.

Mr Ede: A secondary academic stream. But they were not ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Stuart will cease interjecting.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, some students from Lajamanu wanted to come to Darwin. They did not want to go to Yirara. I think the community at Borroloola also had some concerns.

Post-primary facilities are being built in Aboriginal communities. Let me just take that further because, this morning, a petition was presented relating to post-primary education continuing to be available at Yirara and Kormilda.

Mr Ede: The Junior Secondary Studies Certificate.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, it mentioned post-primary education as well. The fact is that, while the Commonwealth and Territory governments are spending massive amounts of money to build post-primary facilities in the bush to cater for the needs of Aboriginal people, it is not possible for students from those areas to attend Yirara or Kormilda to undertake the same education they could receive in their own communities. It is not on. Either the money is spent on places like Yirara and Kormilda or it is used to build post-primary facilities in the communities themselves. That is what the communities wanted and it is what the government has done. There has been concern about duplication and waste of funds. I think that was a responsible way to go and, provided that people understand that that is what is happening, I believe that they will accept it.

Another matter which was of major concern was the lack of access to Aboriginal secondary education grants: ABSEC. This dates back to 1983. The then Minister for Education was Marshall Perron, the member for Fannie Bay. He sought changes and he wrote to Senator Ryan. I will quote a section of his letter:

... changes sought are to allow students at Kormilda and Yirara, Aboriginal residential colleges, to receive Aboriginal secondary education grants. This change would correct present anomalies and allow students at these colleges to be treated in the same way as students in other boarding institutions throughout Australia.

Senator Ryan replied that the federal government would like to help but was unable to do so. That was another issue we were concerned about. I also tried to have ABSEC money made available for students attending Kormilda and Yirara Colleges. It was all right for West Australians. They could come up to Kormilda and receive ABSEC, but we could not get assistance for our students coming in from the communities.

Another point that was under discussion for a long time was the entry criteria. Students attending Kormilda and Yirara Colleges should at least have attained upper primary levels so that they can pursue their secondary studies. It is no good placing a student there who is not up to that standard, and that is very clear. It should have been done but it was not done. The numbers were growing in those colleges but no positive results were achieved and I believe that that is why.

Declining student numbers in many schools was another issue, and not only in Aboriginal schools. We had to look at the problem and decide when closures should occur and what should happen with under-utilised facilities. These



matters have been discussed for a long time. In fact, the Education Advisory Council looked at the question of when closures should occur and Cabinet took a decision that, where government facilities were under-utilised, rather than leave a facility and just close it down, it should be offered to non-government organisations.

It is important to know that background because there has been a great deal of discussion and consultation about these major changes in both Alice Springs and Darwin. Kormilda and Yirara were not seen as Aboriginal high schools and post-primary education was also available there. Mr Speaker, you must remember that, in those days, post-primary facilities were not available in many of the Aboriginal communities. That situation has changed somewhat today. However, there has been a great deal of discussion and consultation.

When I was Minister for Education, I visited over 150 schools and spoke to teachers, students and community leaders. In many cases, the people indicated their concerns in relation to Aboriginal education. Those issues were taken on board. On top of that, in mid-1985, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs criticised Kormilda College and the Chairman of FEPI also received criticism about the college as he moved around the communities. Falling enrolments really brought things to a head in 1985. I think the opposition should really be aware of this fact because, quite obviously, they are not taking it into consideration.

Kormilda College has a capacity for 300 students. At the beginning of 1985, it had 200 to 250 students. At the end of that year, there were between 150 and 175. The lowest number during that year was 140. Many of those students should not really have been there. The reality was that, if this trend had continued, Kormilda College would have reached the stage where it would have had to have been closed. That was the reality. The government wanted to keep the college going. During that period, FEPI discussed the issue. I issued a press release in August 1985, and I will read it out:

Education Minister, Mr Tom Harris, and the Aboriginal Consultative Group, FEPI, are currently in consultation on a government plan to offer boarding facilities at Darwin's Kormilda College to all Territory isolated students from next year. Mr Harris said Cabinet had also endorsed moves to rationalise residential facilities at Kormilda and Yirara College in Alice Springs to improve secondary education standards for Aboriginal students.

He said Aboriginal students would be formally assessed as able to undertake courses, and could only enrol at the colleges if no post-primary facilities were available in their home communities. By applying educational standards for entry and exit at the colleges, the government would be adopting a means to increase the number of Aboriginals with secondary education.

By opening Kormilda and Yirara in later years to all isolated students currently receiving allowances to attend boarding schools outside of the Territory, the government will maximise use of boarding facilities, Mr Harris said. The minister said Aboriginal communities had acknowledged the need to set standards and achieve educational aims. He said the way the colleges had evolved provided too little support to achieving academic standards.

Mr Harris said the opening of the college to non-Aboriginal students was in line with government policy of non-discrimination in the

delivery of services. In doing so it is important that boarding college administration be properly and adequately planned in cooperation with FEPI. Considering the cost, in the region of \$11 000 to \$14 000 a year to accommodate a student, the facilities should be utilised more efficiently, he said. Mr Harris said once procedure was formalised through consultation, fees would be phased in during next year. He said the fees would create no personal hardship, and all students attending the college would be eligible for Commonwealth and Territory allowances.

Mr Speaker, there has been a great deal of consultation. Following on from that, and acknowledging that the enrolments were dropping and the existence of the college was threatened, a working party was set up to look at that aspect. The implementation was referred to the Education Advisory Council which consisted of representatives from FEPI, the NT Teachers Federation and a number of other groups. There has been a great deal of consultation in relation to the moves that were to be taken.

A press release was issued by the member for Arafura on 4 September. It said: 'The Labor member for Arafura said that Aboriginal communities who provide students to Kormilda College in Darwin are completely unaware of the profound changes that have been proposed for the college'. Mr Speaker, I have spent the last 10 minutes explaining the process through which these issues were discussed at length after they had been in the pipeline for many years. Yet again, we have these scare tactics. The 'massive opposition' stems from the fact that these people are being frightened to death by the opposition.

Mr Bell: Come on.

Mr HARRIS: Why don't you help us when we are trying to fight for funds from the Commonwealth government for Aboriginal education? Mr Speaker, you will recall a matter of public importance debate concerning the working party on funding priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' education. It recommended to the Commonwealth government that \$25.3m be provided for Aboriginal education. The member for MacDonnell did not help us in our efforts to gain some of that funding; we had no support whatsoever. Those are the issues to which members of the opposition should address themselves. It is most annoying. I will continue quoting from the press release of the member for Arafura:

Mr Collins was speaking in Darwin today on his return from a visit to his Arafura electorate which covers many of the Aboriginal communities where Kormilda students are drawn. He says it is a disgrace for the Chairman of FEPI, Mr Bill Baird, to state on radio in Darwin today that letters would be written to the communities explaining the proposal to turn Kormilda into an exclusive college to be run by the Presbyterian Church.

It was said that the college was to be exclusive but that did not come from this government, I can assure you of that. We said that it was to cater for everyone. It was not to discriminate between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. It was to cater for everyone and no Aboriginal was to be disadvantaged. Those Aboriginals who were there would be allowed to remain there.

I will continue the press release with this beauty. 'Mr Collins says the lack of consultation highlights the reason why Aboriginal education has been, and will continue to be, a complete failure'. What absolute rubbish! As the

Minister for Education explained today, we lead the way in many areas of Aboriginal education, and that has to be acknowledged. I am sure the member for MacDonnell will acknowledge that we lead the way in certain respects. To say that we are going downhill and that Aboriginal education in the Territory is a failure is total nonsense.

Aboriginal education generally has been a major concern. There are some very real problems. There is a truancy problem. Pilot programs have been put in place to try to assist with that. There are social problems such as the videos, lack of sleep for students, the fact that they are in communities where drinking is a problem, kava, petrol sniffing and the lack of adequate food for the children. Many problems have to be addressed in Aboriginal communities and we need everyone to assist in resolving those problems. As a government, we cannot do it alone. The opposition certainly cannot do it. Many of the problems can only be tackled by the communities themselves. During the course of a matter of public importance discussion on 6 March last year, the member for MacDonnell said: 'There is constant reference to the importance of community participation and the minister is to be commended for this. He has released statement after statement promoting the idea of community participation'. I am very pleased that he noted that, because it is important. The communities themselves are directly involved in those problems and they make a commitment to their children's education.

There have been many opportunities for the opposition to comment on Aboriginal education. When I began to speak, I remarked that the member for Arafura, who is the opposition spokesman on education, has not contributed to a debate on Aboriginal matters since I became a minister a number of years ago. That is a disgrace. If you check in the Hansard, you will find that very few questions were asked on Aboriginal education by the then Leader of the Opposition.

The motion is absolute nonsense where it refers to the failure to consult with the Aboriginal people before instituting major changes to Kormilda and Yirara Colleges. I have made it very clear that there has been a long process of discussion and consultation. People have known about it all along. We want the opposition to help us, not to chase political points by saying the government will be selling this and doing that. Of course people become angry and upset when they hear such absolute nonsense.

The second part of the motion calls upon the government to uphold the traditional commitment of the Australian people to universal quality education. The reality is that there is a long way to go in relation to Aboriginal education. No one denies that. When I was the Minister for Education, I commented that the only thing standing in the way of Aboriginal education was time. That is what it is all about: they need time. It will not happen today or tomorrow. They have tried to move in 20 years a distance which has taken us nearly 200 years. We are talking about traditional Aboriginals. They need time and understanding from members of this government who are interested in the Aboriginal people and in trying to assist them. They do not need people scaring them into believing that we are shutting down their schools. The motion does not stand up under scrutiny; it is absolute nonsense.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the government speakers on this motion have made a great deal of play about the opposition scaring people in Aboriginal communities in respect of the changes that were announced by the Minister for Education towards the end of the last sittings of this Assembly. I will return to that theme in a moment.

I have 2 areas of interest in this particular subject. The most important is that I represent a number of communities from whence students go to Yirara College. I see the successes and also, I am not unashamed to say, the kids who do not necessarily benefit from going to secondary colleges. Having seen enough of the successful students at Yirara College, I am prepared to fight for it. Many of the students who are taking up positions of responsibility in their communities do so because of their education at the 2 colleges. I think more can be done, but I certainly think that the colleges are a very important step along the way. I am very concerned that what we have with these proposals is either a conscious or unconscious attempt to close down Yirara College. I am not so familiar with Kormilda College. I will elaborate on that theme in a moment.

My second reason for being interested in this particular issue is that, in the middle of 1974, I came to the Northern Territory, after having spent several years as a high school mathematics teacher, to teach secondary mathematics at Yirara College. Since so much turns on this distinction between secondary and post-primary, this is perhaps of some interest to the minister and anybody else on the government's frontbench who might contribute to this particular debate. Having spent a few years of my life teaching mathematics from form 1 to form 6, through the range of the high school mathematics subjects, I had to learn a great deal when I came here. I spent 6 months initially at Yirara College before I went to teach at Areyonga. I think that those experiences gave me a very good understanding of the pedagogical problems in Aboriginal schools.

I also learnt that the relationship between education and life as seen by Yirara students was vastly different to the way it was perceived by students at the Melbourne high school where I taught prior to coming here. The basic difference was that, if a student from a non-Aboriginal household was not interested in particular subjects, you were always able to say: 'Listen son, your mum and dad expect you to learn how to solve linear equations. If you do not want to do them, go and have a chat to mum and dad about it'. That is a recourse that one never has with Aboriginal kids.

The larger issue of the relationship between traditionally-orientated Aboriginal communities and the wider society is a pretty problematic one. Suffice it to say that it becomes pretty concentrated when, for a start, the language of instruction is a foreign language, a second language, as well as there being problems of extraordinary cultural distance involved. I have some sympathy with the problems involved in Aboriginal secondary education.

To return to the theme of the accusations being levelled at the opposition, the idea that we are mounting a scare campaign must be treated with complete and utter contempt. If the publicity given to the issue has contributed to undermining the confidence of Aboriginal parents in those secondary residential colleges, the government has only itself to blame. I suggest that the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health cast their minds back to the question I asked the Minister for Education on Thursday 28 August: 'Is the Northern Territory government intending to alter existing residential arrangements for Aboriginal secondary students at Yirara College in Alice Springs and Kormilda College in Darwin?'. A pretty innocuous question, I would have thought. Mr Speaker, you will recall that the Minister for Education was berating the opposition for having somehow stampeded the government into making a premature announcement in this regard. All he had to say was: 'Yes, there has been some consideration and there have been reviews'.

It is exactly the sort of the answer I received from the Leader of Government Business about his roadside inn reviews. The Minister for Education is a new boy; he is not very flash. Far from being concerned about the question, do you know how he replied, Mr Speaker? He said: 'I am very pleased that the honourable member has brought that matter to the attention of this Assembly'. That hardly smacks of somebody who felt as though he was being stampeded into giving an answer.

There are 2 other points in his answer which I want to pick up in the time that is available to me. They demand considerable explanation from the minister at some appropriate time. He really got wound up. He said that, for a number of years, these colleges catered for a number of Aboriginal students. 'It is a fact that over \$60m has been spent on those 2 facilities but the end result has been that not one student has matriculated from either centre'.

The shadow minister for education made some fairly pertinent comments about the talisman of matriculation. I was rather surprised to hear the Minister for Education raise that issue. It set me thinking and I have decided to put a series of questions on notice: to the Chief Minister, 'what is the curriculum vitae of the minister and, secondly, has the minister matriculated'; to the Minister for Primary Production and Conservation, 'what is the curriculum vitae of the minister and has the minister matriculated'; to the Minister for Community Development, 'what is the minister's curriculum vitae and has the minister matriculated'; to the Minister for Health and Housing, 'what is the curriculum vitae of the minister and has the minister matriculated'; to the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications, 'what is the curriculum vitae of the minister and has the minister matriculated'; to the Minister for Education, 'what is the curriculum vitae of the minister and has the minister matriculated'; to the Minister for Mines and Energy, 'what is the curriculum vitae of the minister and has the minister matriculated'; and to the Minister for Transport and Works, Ports and Fisheries and Lands, 'what is the curriculum vitae of the minister and has the minister matriculated'? I would like to place those on notice because, quite obviously, matriculation is a matter of such concern to the Minister for Education that I believe the public of the Northern Territory deserves some information about the quality of the frontbench in that regard.

The second issue that I wanted to pick up has been the subject of correspondence between the Minister for Education and myself. For somebody who was very pleased that I raised the question, he certainly dug himself a hole. He said: 'The attitude of remote communities can be illustrated by the fact that, of students in remote communities eligible to attend those schools, twice as many travel interstate for their education as stay here'. I notice that I interjected, saying 'That is rubbish', and I have absolutely no intention of resiling from my interjection. The issue has already been well canvassed here. However, I will actually read into the Hansard the reply I received from the minister when I drew to his attention that this was a gross distortion of the facts. In the closing paragraph of my letter to the minister I said: 'In my view, such a gross distortion of the facts demands action on your part so that the public record of the Legislative Assembly is as accurate as possible'.

The fact of the matter is that 170-odd Aboriginal kids are going interstate for schooling. The number of Aboriginal kids attending Kormilda and Yirara for secondary education is somewhere between 250 and 500. If the Minister for Education wants to make some spurious distinction between secondary education and post-primary education so that half the kids who attend these schools are in no man's land, I suggest that he has a rather

inadequate grasp of his portfolio. The plain fact of the matter is that all the kids who attend those colleges are pursuing worthwhile courses. They have improved in standard considerably in the 10 to 12 years that I have been closely watching them. It has been a gradual improvement and this sort of speculation about change, which is entirely of the government's making, has seriously undermined the quality of education that those schools are able to provide.

It is a matter of considerable concern to me. We have the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health belly-aching about Aboriginal parents who are concerned about the quality of the education their children receive. As the shadow minister for education said, if there is one perennial phenomenon, it is that of parents complaining about the quality of education that their kids receive at school. I have done it. I have talked about it here and I am quite happy to discuss it here or outside or anywhere you like. I have made my criticisms with respect to the education that my own kids have received. I do not think that there is anything particularly remarkable about Aboriginal parents, whether it be at Papunya or elsewhere, saying that they are concerned about Yirara College. That is not a justification for wholesale reorganisations and attempts to sell off Yirara College.

These things send a shiver down the spines of parents, teachers and kids, and this government and this minister are responsible for it. He deserves to stand roundly condemned for it in the terms of this motion. I heartily support the motion.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I will be brief because of the lateness of the hour. Most of the utter balderdash that the Minister for Education spoke will be quite easily seen as such by the reader of Hansard who goes back to my original speech and sees that nothing said by the minister complies with the facts.

There is, however, one point that needs to be made, partly because it gained the highest decibel rating in his speech and also because it draws on a number of pieces of paper which are not in Hansard, to enable people to see that his statement is quite incorrect. I wrote to the minister on 8 August asking him about the changes in Yirara and Kormilda and the rumours regarding the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate. I never received an answer to that letter. It was not until the last day of the last sittings that the member of MacDonnell had the perspicacity to raise this issue and we obtained the result that we did. I wish to point out how my telegram related to the minister's answer to the question. He was asked what he was doing in regard to Kormilda and Yirara. First of all, he stated that he had received expressions of interest from various organisations interested in taking over Kormilda College. My first point was that the Minister for Education had announced plans to sell Kormilda. I now find I was wrong in that regard. He did not plan to sell Kormilda College; he planned to give it away. If that evoked more fear among people in my electorate, he was sorry.

The next point related to Yirara. I stated that a decision on whether to sell Yirara would be made in a year or 2. In his answer, the minister said: 'I am presently considering that particular recommendation. I am also following up my predecessor's initiative in requesting religious organisations to signify interest in regard to both Kormilda College and Yirara. In the case of Yirara, nothing has occurred as yet'. I stated that a decision on whether to sell Yirara would be made in a year or 2. I believe that that was a fair interpretation of what the minister was saying. Maybe I should have said that a decision on whether to give Yirara away or not would be made in a year or 2.

The third point in my telex was that I had been told that, from next year, Yirara would not teach academic stream students. That point has been confirmed in this debate again today, as it was during the last sittings. The students will simply be boarded at Yirara and will have to go to Alice Springs High School. If they do not fit in or if they fail, they will be sent home if their community has post-primary facilities. That has also been confirmed.

The only inaccuracy, if you could call it that, is that I used the word 'sell' in relation to Kormilda and Yirara when I should have said 'give away'. As to whether that particular news caused fear and trepidation throughout the communities, I can tell you that it did, and it was not because people were confused about whether the schools were to be given away or sold. I do not believe they have quite that much concern for the government's finances. Their main concern is for the education of their children.

I will read out a relevant part of a letter that I received from Lajamanu Community Council. Lajamanu is a community which has always taken a very strong interest in the education of its children, as the Minister for Health knows.

Mr Harris: I stayed there. It is a lovely place.

Mr EDE: Yes, I was there at the same time. I recall you having an interesting discussion with the janitor. Mr Speaker, they had a lot in common.

The letter from the council said: 'We are very unhappy about the minister's announcement to sell or otherwise dispose of Kormilda College and we feel that Yirara may go the same way in a year or 2'. That shows, Mr Speaker, that it was not concern about the sale or other disposition of the college that worried them; it was the fact that they were moving outside the government system. They went on to say:

We have heard that Yirara will not teach academic stream students from next year, and we can see problems ahead for students who will be sent to Alice Springs High School. We would like to have talked to representatives from the Department of Education before these proposed changes were made. No consultation has been made with us by any member of the Education Department nor, for that matter, FEPI, or any other organisation regarding this matter.

That lays to rest the argument that the people were concerned about Kormilda or Yirara being given away rather than sold. Their concern was that they believed their children's educational opportunities would be impaired if they are required to attend Alice Springs High School rather than continuing academic studies at Yirara.

If we need another intimation of the way in which the current Minister for Education twists words, I will quote from a telex I received from him on 5 September, just after I sent out the other telegrams: 'You are aware that there is no intention to change the traditional role that Yirara College plays in the education of Aboriginal students from remote areas'. Mr Speaker, isn't that cute? 'There is no intention to change the traditional role'. 'Traditional' is the word that counts. The students will make a great leap back 5 years and return to their traditional role. They will not be continuing in the role that they have performed for the last 3 years. Mr Speaker, don't let the minister convince you that I am twisting words. That is an example of the way he twists words.

If we need a final example, we need only look at what he said on 29 September 1986 during an ABC interview with Ms Vicki Gillick when he was berating Yirara: 'How many students have started doing Junior Secondary Studies Certificates at Yirara and how many have passed to date? I can tell you. Over the last 3 years, 29 only have managed to get through'. In fact, the reason why only 29 have managed to get through in the last 3 years is because they have only sat for the certificate during the last 2 years. However, the minister did not wish to intimate that the pass rate was so high that there is no other school in the Northern Territory which can boast of such a significant rate so he conveniently stretched the period to 3 years instead of 2. The students have sat for the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate at Yirara only for the past 2 years and, during that time, 29 students have passed.

Mr Speaker, I believe the many inadequacies and failures in the minister's speech will be obvious to anybody who reads back over what I actually said rather than the minister's cute twisting of the facts and I rest my case on that. I believe it is quite obvious that the motion should be supported.

Motion negatived.

#### ADOPTION OF CHILDREN BILL (Serial 234)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, this bill is introduced in response to changing attitudes throughout Australia to the rights of those involved in the adoption process. Years ago, adoptions were a closed book. Once a child was adopted, the ties linking the child with its natural parents were considered to be broken irretrievably. It was thought by society that, by the act of adoption, the natural parents had forgone all rights to the child. Over the years, these attitudes have changed. The most significant reason for the change has been the attempts, sometimes desperate, by adopted children to find their natural parents and sometimes the attempts of natural parents to find the natural children they gave up. We are probably all aware of a heart-breaking story along those lines.

This bill will provide the opportunity for any party to an adoption to seek information on any other party while recognising the privacy rights of those concerned. Under the current legislation, there is no facility for such information to be provided. The bill ensures that no information will be given to any person without the express consent of all other parties involved. It recognises the rights of those concerned in an adoption to keep their identity from other parties. Adoptions can be carried out, as we all know, under quite traumatic circumstances.

This bill will enable an adopted person, upon application in writing to the minister, to seek information regarding himself, his natural parents or relatives. The minister, on receipt of such an application, will not give any information from which the identity of the natural parent can be ascertained without first obtaining the consent in writing of the natural parent or evidence of the death of a natural parent. Where the adopted person is under 18 years of age, the application for information on his natural parents must also be accompanied by the written consent of his adoptive parents or evidence of the death of each adoptive parent.



Under quite stringent safeguards of privacy, this bill recognises the right of an adopted person to obtain information on his natural family. Similarly, it will provide for natural parents to seek information on their adopted children and or adoptive parents. It will provide for adoptive parents to seek information on the adopted person, his natural parents or relatives and, where the minister deems the circumstances desirable, it will provide for natural relatives to seek information about the adopted person, his adoptive parents or his relatives.

Where a person is unable to obtain information because a necessary consent has not been provided, he may apply to the court. Where the court is satisfied that the minister has taken reasonable steps to obtain the consent, and it is in the best interests of the applicant to receive the information, the court may make an order directing the minister to give the applicant the information. If a person has refused to give consent, the court shall not make such an order without giving that person an opportunity to be heard in circumstances where his identity is not disclosed to the applicant.

Where the minister receives an application for information, he will give such information as is contained in the records in his possession or obtainable by him on inquiry. The minister may obtain information from court records relating to proceedings resulting in the adoption order. In providing such information, the minister must be satisfied that it is reasonably likely to be true and it does not unreasonably disclose information relating to the personal affairs of any other person. The minister shall not give such information unless the applicant has attended an interview with an approved counsellor.

The bill also provides for the establishment and maintenance of an Adoption Information Register. This register will contain the name and address of any adopted person, natural parent, adoptive parent or relative of an adopted person who has requested registration in writing. The register will also contain the wishes of the registered person with respect to obtaining information about any other person who is or may become registered and his wishes with respect to the disclosure of his name, address or other information concerning him to any other person so registered. The name and address of any person on the register will not be disclosed to any other person without his consent in writing and any person on the register may amend or cancel his entry by written request to the minister.

Mr Speaker, the bill will bring our adoption laws into line with current community attitudes and existing state legislation and it will recognise the wishes of all those involved in the adoption process. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

#### MOTION

#### Reference to Public Accounts Committee

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that the following matter be referred to the Public Accounts Committee:

All matters concerning the recent decision of the Northern Territory government relating to the aero-medical contract including:

- (1) the adequacy of the tender documents;

(2) whether all relevant matters were considered in assessing the tenders;

(3) whether proper procedures were followed in assessing the tenders;

(4) whether the Tender Board formed for the purposes was properly constituted;

(5) whether, in the determination of the contract, the minister exercised sufficient care and responsibility; and

(6) whether any change in tender procedures is warranted.

Mr Speaker, it is obviously difficult to debate this matter at any length after the vigorous discussion this morning. Because of that, because of the lateness of the hour and because I understand that the government is prepared to support the motion with an amendment of its own, I will be brief. The terms of reference of the Public Accounts Committee provide, among other things, the ability to inquire into and to report to the Legislative Assembly on any question in connection with the public accounts of the Territory referred to it by the Assembly. In the view of the opposition, the matter of the aero-medical contract is a classic case for the Public Accounts Committee. If I went any further than that, I would probably provoke a dispute. I think the fact that the government is prepared to support the proposal after amendment is an indication that it accepts that point of view. I am happy to stop at this point so that the motion can be passed and the matter referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting paragraphs (5) and (6) and inserting in their stead: '(5) this matter shall not be considered by the committee until such time as all litigation relating to the matter has been completed'.

Mr Speaker, it is the opinion of the government that paragraph (5) as proposed by the opposition is not appropriate. Paragraph (6) will not be considered by this side of the Assembly in view of the fact of the already announced complete review of the tender system by the Chief Minister.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, for the record, the opposition does not support those amendments. We believe that the motion that we put forward is better. However, in the interests of having this motion passed, I will not pursue those arguments. I simply want it noted for the record that we oppose the amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

#### WITHDRAWAL OF NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I wish to withdraw General Business Notice No 7 standing in my name and I believe that the Assembly deserves an explanation as to why I wish to do that.

The reason is that the government this morning announced that it had picked up an idea that the opposition had been pushing for some time: the establishment of an Industrial Supplies Office. I would like to take the

opportunity again of formally congratulating the government on taking this decision. I had a very good speech that I intended to give on the value of an Industrial Supplies Office, but all that I can say is that it is a very positive step and I am sure that it will significantly advantage industry in the Northern Territory.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

DISCHARGE OF BILL FROM NOTICE PAPER  
Work Health Bill (Serial 203)

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that Government Business, order of the day No 12, Work Health Bill (Serial 203) be discharged from the Notice Paper.

Motion agreed to.

WORK HEALTH BILL  
(Serial 232)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, the Work Health Bill (Serial 203) was introduced into the Assembly on 19 June 1986 with the intention that it pass all stages at these sittings. Since that introduction, the government has continued the work foreshadowed in the second-reading speech, checked the bill for clarity and consistency, considered the amendments proposed by the Leader of the Opposition and followed up with discussions with interest groups, with 2 major consultations being chaired by myself. As a result of that work and those consultations, a number of amendments are proposed to the bill. The majority of these are of a relatively minor nature.

This new bill will not alter the fundamentals of the bill introduced on 30 June and, accordingly, it is my intention that the new bill pass through all stages at these sittings. I intend to move for a suspension of standing orders to permit this. In order that debate on this new bill might take account of the changes to the original bill, I gave the Leader of the Opposition advance notice of the amendments by providing him with a copy of the new bill. All members of the Assembly will be provided with what would have been a schedule of amendments to the original bill so that they are able to identify the changes which have been made to that bill.

I do not think that it is necessary to repeat what I said in my second-reading speech in June. As I have said, the philosophy and fundamentals of the proposed work health scheme have not changed. I would like to outline simply the more significant changes that have been made.

It was foreshadowed in my second-reading speech that there would be further refinement of the definition of 'worker' and the system of exempting independent contractors from the application of the compensation and compulsory insurance provisions of the bill by certificate. It is the government's firm belief that this innovative system will be effective in reducing the confusion of who is and who is not covered for compensation before an accident occurs. The cost of this confusion to the system is great because non-insurance and under-insurance cause shortfalls in premium collection which were estimated by the Doody Inquiry to be as high as 45.6% in 1983.

In my second-reading speech, I said that actuarial information was to be sought on the possibility that an insurer, paying compensation to a worker injured in a journey accident, should recover benefits payable under the Motor

Accidents Compensation Scheme and offset those benefits against the cost of paying benefits under the work health scheme. Actuarial advice is that, if this system of reimbursement were to occur, the compensation system would save 2% to 3% of employer premiums, but an additional cost of approximately \$13 per vehicle would be placed on vehicle registrations. The government has decided to maintain, for the time being, the existing principle that journey accidents are compensable under workers' compensation.

The final area of development foreshadowed in the second-reading speech was the formulation of the duties owed by employers to rehabilitation counsellors, and the position of counsellors in court. The bill now includes the duty of employers to allow rehabilitation counsellors reasonable access to the work place and to participate in practicable efforts to retrain workers. To avoid embroiling the counsellors in the dispute resolution process as arbitrators between worker and employers or insurer, the bill now provides that counsellors shall give evidence only with the worker's written permission and, once called as a witness, shall not be compelled to answer questions detrimental to the worker's interest. This exclusion of rehabilitation counsellors is necessary if the counsellors are to be seen as impartial by all participants in the rehabilitation process.

A number of matters were raised during consultation. Clause 76 has been amended, as a result of submissions from interested groups, to restrict the benefit payable to the worker under this clause to the amount which is necessary to achieve reasonable mobility within the community, including mobility which promotes the likelihood of obtaining employment or retraining.

Clause 32 has been amended also as a result of submissions received. The clause was seen as potentially in conflict with the jurisdiction of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. Subclauses (3) and (4) have been amended so that the Work Health Authority or its delegate will give an immediate ruling if there is a dispute as to whether an immediate risk to health and safety exists. The clause is silent as to the matter of appeal against the authority's ruling, thereby leaving recourse open to the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. The Law Society of the Northern Territory has continued to seek the retention of rights to common law actions. It was supported in this by the Trades and Labor Council representatives at the meetings of interest groups which I chaired.

The Law Society suggested a compromise of retaining common law rights of action with specific limitations. The limitations proposed included placing a ceiling on damages payable for pain and suffering, increasing the statutory redemption discount rate in order to lower lump sum awards, placing a maximum figure on the recovery of medical and rehabilitation expenses, imposing a statutory limit on the loss of income that can be the subject of compensation and imposing a statutory reduction in the loss of earning capacity that can be recovered. The government rejects these compromises. The retention of common law rights, in any form, is inimical to the thrust of the bill towards promoting rehabilitation and adequately compensating long-term incapacitated workers. By placing artificial and arbitrary limits on lump sum payments, the compromise could work to the detriment of the injured worker whilst increasing the cost of compensation overall.

The Leader of the Opposition submitted a number of suggested amendments, 3 of which have been incorporated in this bill. The definition of 'family' in clause 49 has been broadened to include Aboriginal concepts for the purpose of determining dependency for death benefits. Clause 72 now allows for the inclusion of a relevant medical specialist on the appeal panel, where

practicable, for assessment of impairment. Under clause 90, reasonable notice of medical examinations is to be given to workers.

The most significant amendments proposed by the Leader of the Opposition, but not included in the bill, dealt with clause 65. The proposed amendments would see recipients of long-term incapacity benefits with dependent children receive an additional 7% of average weekly earnings per child. This amendment was proposed out of concern that low-income recipients with 2 or more children could be worse off under this legislation than under the existing Workers' Compensation Act. If these amendments were adopted, the effect would be to raise costs by an estimated 2% and to give a large portion of the new benefit to people the opposition is not concerned about - recipients receiving more benefits under the work health scheme. The government is not prepared to agree to any increase in the cost of the scheme unless a compensating offset can be found. It is suggested that this should be a matter for review by the ministerial advisory council, at a later date, in the light of claims experience.

The rest of the amendments are mostly of a procedural or clarifying nature. The most significant are as follows. Clause 4(5) has been amended to ensure that employment must have contributed materially to a gradual injury or disease rather than being merely a contributing factor. The new clause 55A ensures that the last employer where the worker was exposed to the risk concerned is liable for compensation for diseases even though this employer may recover costs from a previous employer, as under the current Workers' Compensation Act.

Clause 51 has been strengthened to make the intention to abolish common law actions quite clear.

Clause 14 has been amended to give the authority power to audit employer records in order to check wages returns. This avoids the need to impose a stamp duty in order to utilise the tax office audit powers.

Clause 89 obliges the worker to inform his employer of any change in circumstances so that he does not simply return to work with another employer. Clause 66(1) obliges the worker to present himself at reasonable intervals for assessment of employment prospects, to achieve consistency with clause 90 concerning medical examinations. Clause 84(4) is an amendment to ensure that an employer can recover moneys paid out where a claim has been conditionally accepted, but is not subsequently justified.

Clause 65A provides that the minister will have the ability to prescribe rates of compensation for volunteer bushfire fighters and emergency workers. The amendment to clause 185(1) will ensure that injuries occurring before the date of commencement are dealt with under the act this bill proposes to repeal; that is, the existing Workers' Compensation Act. Paragraph (a) of clause 94 contains an amendment to enable evidence to be taken anywhere in Australia.

The structure of the Work Health Authority is complete and the 15 staff have been substantially selected. No additional positions have been created in the Northern Territory Public Service to establish the Work Health Authority. There will be no work health officers outside Darwin as was planned originally. Discussions are under way with other departments for representation outside Darwin. The information system is being developed within budget and on schedule. Administrative arrangements for insurance status and stock units of wages statements are being developed in cooperation

with the NT Commissioner of Taxes. Contrary to the original proposal, no stamp duty will be levied.

Procedures for the management of compensation claims for NT government employees have been developed in consultation with the TIO and government departments. Administrative arrangements have been prepared to coordinate the government's safety functions and to avoid administrative overlap, and these have been approved by Cabinet.

Regulations are in the early stages of preparation. Rules for the new Work Health Court are being drafted by the Department of Law and the Work Health Authority with the cooperation of the Chief Magistrate.

An information dissemination program is being prepared which will include a series of information leaflets, seminars in Darwin, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, and a modest media launch campaign. Standard claim forms, medical certificates, wages declarations and exemption certificates have been designed and will be printed soon.

Liaison with the Commonwealth government regarding amendment of relevant Commonwealth legislation such as the Compensation (Commonwealth Government Employees) Act and the Seamen's Compensation Act has achieved the passage of the necessary amendments through the federal parliament. These provisions can be commenced simultaneously with the commencement of the Work Health Act. They will ensure that all NT government employees are covered under the new act, including compulsory transferees.

Mr Speaker, I believe that this new bill represents an innovative and generally-agreed approach by all parties to the problems confronting them in relation to workers' compensation in particular. I am grateful for the amount of time which people have devoted to the finalisation of the bill, and I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Work Health Bill (Serial 232) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

#### APPROPRIATION BILL 1986-87 (Serial 218)

In committee:

Appropriation for division 5 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 6:

Mr LEO: I have a question for the Chief Minister. Figures on page 20 of Budget Paper No 4 show a decrease of some \$2m for operational expenses. Page 9 indicates a fall of some \$3m. The explanation given is that the cost of programmed consultancy fees and expenses for specialised services is shown, and the variation is the result of non-recurring expenditure for services in 1986-87. Could the Chief Minister tell me what these non-recurring expenses

for services are? What services have been curtailed? What consultancy fees are no longer paid that would account for a drop of some \$2.2m?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I do not have specific details. It is a shame that honourable members did not take the opportunity to give me advanced warning of questions, as is the normal practice. I understand questions have been circulated to other ministers but I have not received any. I will ensure that the information is made available to the honourable member. It relates to specific one-off consultancies. Quite often, there is a series of one-off consultancies. Only rarely does the Department of Chief Minister have ongoing consultancies of a lengthy nature. They tend to be short term and often expensive consultancies relating to major items of government business.

Mr LEO: Obviously, in a time of budgetary constraint, the government is trying to cut expenses everywhere. In his written reply, I hope the Chief Minister will give some indication as to whether or not the consultancies were necessary in the first place.

Appropriation for division 6 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 7:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I refer the Chief Minister to page 32 of Budget Paper No 4. Allocations are increased by about 3% or 4% except for 'executive and administration' which is about 16%. The latter represents largely capital expenditure for new vehicles.

However, under 'management services command', the bulk of the 20% of increased expenditure is above inflationary costs. Explanations are given on the following page. Administrative and operational expenses have been increased by 30% and the explanation given is that there will be more cadets. Under 'salaries and payments in the nature of salaries', there has been an increase of some 12%. However, in other divisions within the police service, the increases range between 5% and 3%.

Does the 12% increase in 'management services command' indicate an increase in personnel or is it a real increase in wages? Will other sections have a decrease in personnel? In other words, is the management services command to increase its number of personnel and that of the other commands to be decreased.

Mr HATTON: In respect of the other areas of the service, there will be no decrease in personnel. On average, some 38 members on the establishment of the police are recruits in training. That creates a problem. We have built those costs into the administrative areas. However, that affects the police force on the ground, and we need to address that. We cannot really do that until after the first budget review. A cost in excess of \$1m a year is involved in the police force just to make that apparently simple shift.

In respect of the administrative areas, the Department of the Police, more than any other department, has been particularly diligent over the period in reducing its administrative and administrative staff costs. Whereas many other departments have been under pressure to make reductions, there is no suggestion that it should occur within the administrative areas. When we examined the situation, we found some positions which we believe are underclassified. The department has been very diligent in trying to hold down costs. I would defend the Commissioner of Police totally in this respect. If anything, he is probably a bit of a scrooge when it comes to providing what



might be called frills. I have gone right through and the provisions to meet resources are at an absolute minimum. I cannot go into specific details of what each of the 67 positions are. A couple of clerical and lower level positions were reclassified as well.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I will repeat the question so that the Chief Minister can reply to me in writing.

The increases for salaries for various activities in the police force range between 5% to 3%: Northern Command, Southern Command, Crimes Services Command, and Executive and Administration. However, in the Management Services Command, the allocation for salaries and payments in nature of salaries has increased by some 12%. Does that mean that there is an increase in staff in that particular area or is there a decrease in staff in all those other commands?

Appropriation for division 7 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 23, 89 and 90 agreed to.

Progress reported.

TABLED PAPER  
Report of Railway Executive Group

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I table a report of the Railway Executive Group on the Alice Springs to Darwin railway.

Mr Speaker, last June I foreshadowed to honourable members that, during these sittings, I would provide a further progress report on the Alice Springs to Darwin railway project. The Railway Executive Group has now presented its report to Cabinet. As I anticipated in June, it is a careful and sober assessment of what the line will cost to build and equip, and what it may be expected to earn after meeting operating costs.

Quite deliberately, the work of the group has been aimed at 2 distinct but related targets. The first has been the projection of a base-year transport task and earning capacity for the railway, devoid of 'blue sky' future developments, and fully aware of the railway's need to be competitive with other modes of transport in the Territory. The second has been the determination of a set of least-cost, but nonetheless safe and acceptable, construction and operating standards for the line.

The Railway Executive Group has done its job well, almost too well, in the sense that it has set itself deliberately to ignore the Territory's demonstrated capacities since self-government to grow faster and to do a number of things not only better than expected, but often better than they have been done elsewhere in Australia. After they have read the report, honourable members will probably share with me the belief that the railway will be carrying bigger tonnages and earning more than is projected soon after it is completed. For example, it would take just 1 new railway-using Territory project to come on stream in the 1990s, from the long list of possibilities, to transform the commercial reality radically. Development of the Port of Darwin at one end of the land bridge across Australia would have a similar result.

Such possibilities have been put firmly to one side in the preparation of the report that I have tabled today. This report establishes a bottom line

for the project. It shows that the Territory has a basic railway task that can be performed in a realistic and economical way. It makes a useful start on how the project's funding might be structured. However, for those who share our confidence in the future of the Territory, it will do no more than provide reassurance that the down-side risks of participation in this great developmental project are low. For them, the rewards of participation from the outset will be greater than the report allows itself to anticipate.

It is against that background that I present to honourable members, in some detail, the major findings and recommendations of the Railway Executive Group.

On freight task and revenue projections, the report starts from the following facts regarding freight already moving within the Northern Territory and open to capture by the completed railway:

The central corridor between Alice Springs and Darwin is the dominant land freight route, and the majority of freight moving in that corridor already makes use of the existing railway south of Alice Springs;

northbound freight exceeds southbound freight by a factor of almost 2 to 1; and,

over two-thirds of the freight concerned is non-bulk and directly related to the needs of the northern population, and is described in the report as 'general freight requirements'.

After surveying existing rates for carrying goods by road and or rail, the report also notes that rail freight rates are lower generally than competing road rates. Consequently, the report assumes, for its base-year projections, that:

1. generally rail will be preferred to road for carriage of bulk cargoes over long distances;
2. tariffs on the Alice Springs to Darwin railway will be 20% to 25% lower than present road rates for comparable freight tasks;
3. intense competition is to be expected from road operators for backhaul, mainly southbound cargoes, requiring even lower rail rates in that direction;
4. rate differentials will be much less in evidence where dedicated rolling stock is used, for example, in carrying petroleum products; and
5. the base-year railway share of freight carried north of Alice Springs will be no less than the proportion already carried by rail as far as Alice Springs and, not only would transshipment by road at that point make no commercial sense with the railway link to Darwin completed, but experience with the Tarcoola to Alice Springs standard gauge link since its opening in 1980 suggests that the proportion will, in fact, increase.

The report goes on to assume, in making its projections for future growth, in traffic on the railway, that:

6. there will be no increase in general freight requirements per head of population estimated to average, northbound, about 3.5 t per year, so that the rate of growth in this major component of the transport task will be limited to the rate of population growth;
7. only projects which are presently operational or virtually certain to proceed over the next few years will generate freight for the line, and the total tonnage carried will increase by only 3% per year from the base-year level;
8. no additional traffic will be generated by the presence of a rail line where none existed before; that is to say, the developmental consequences of the line itself have been ignored in the rail traffic projections; and
9. there will be no shift of traffic away from the eastern and western road corridors into the central corridor, despite the greater appeal the central corridor should have upon completion of the line.

Together these assumptions imply that the railway will carry 70% of total freight tonnage an average distance of 1000 km and earn an average of a little under 4¢ per net tonne kilometre for doing so. It follows that railway gross revenue in 1991 will total \$31.5m, measured in today's dollars. Within that total, two-thirds will be earned from freight moving the entire distance between Alice Springs and Darwin, 80% will come from north-bound traffic and well over 80% will be earned from the carriage of general freight, mainly north-bound, and petroleum, mainly south-bound from Darwin.

As a final comment on the projected freight task, 5 locations will account for most of the operations of the line, namely Darwin, Mataranka (principally for its limestone deposits), Katherine (boosted by the Tindal Air Base development), Tennant Creek (particularly as a staging point for traffic from Queensland and, to a lesser extent, New South Wales) and Alice Springs. According to the report's projections, other points requiring service will be Batchelor, Adelaide River, Pine Creek, Daly Waters, Renner Springs and Ti Tree.

I stress that the freight projections are based upon particularly cautious assumptions. We can be confident that, to use the words in the report, they are at the lower bound of any reasonable range of expectations. The projects ignore the enormous developmental potential of the line and the very real prospects of new developments and hence rail traffic appearing once the line is in place. On the revenue side, it would be difficult to devise a more severe test for the project.

I turn now to the route, engineering and construction costs. These comprise the second part of the Railway Executive Group's report which assesses the alignment alternatives, a range of design standards and the approach to construction of the line - all against the overriding objective of containing capital costs to the lowest levels consistent with safe and acceptable standards of operation. In my June statement, I indicated that a number of cost-saving options were under careful review by the group and its consultants. Some of those options, such as the use of timber sleepers and the building of timber trestle bridges, have not survived the further tests applied to them, at some loss, I would guess, to the Territory's cartoonists.

Others, such as the re-use of part of the old North Australian Railway route and bridges have survived, and remain significant cost-saving features of the group's proposal. It is estimated that \$23m, in today's dollars, can be saved by re-using the NAR route over the 200 km between Katherine and Adelaide River, the larger part arising from net savings on bridge and culvert costs. Cameron McNamara and Partners, a major firm of consulting engineers, has confirmed that it is both possible and economical to re-use the existing NAR bridges after they have been strengthened. The majority of bridges to be strengthened comprise wrought-iron, superstructure beams which would require the welding of supplementary steel plating. Laboratory testing commissioned from the University of Queensland has confirmed the feasibility of welding the wrought iron and that satisfactory fatigue resistance can be achieved. I mention this incidental technical aspect of the report simply as an example of the care the Railway Executive Group has taken at each step to ensure that its findings are both financially sensible and technically feasible.

With the exceptions of the section between Katherine and Adelaide River and some tighter curves and increased gradients over the next 65 km north to Noonamah, the remainder of the third route sticks closely to that contemplated by Australian National Railways before it was obliged to cease planning for the line.

Planning has proceeded to the point where some 70% of the alignment is already pegged with the remaining 30% precisely located on the map. The bulk of necessary survey work has been finished, including a relatively short but crucial section commissioned at our expense by the Railway Executive Group. So far as the old ANR alignment is concerned, no survey is available. However, the old design drawings are available and therefore only limited calibration surveys will be required to give indicative quantities. Potential ballast and groundwater supplies for earthwork construction purposes have been assessed for the entire route. Certain gaps have been identified, and provision has been made for them in estimated construction costs.

No right-of-way or environmental impact problems are anticipated over the preferred route. The land councils have confirmed their backing for the project and the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority has confirmed that there are no issues of significance that affect the proposed alignment. Overall, the railway route has been checked out thoroughly and has passed every test the Railway Executive Group has applied to it. It does not appear that any significant engineering problems will be associated with the line's construction.

A track formation width of 6.7 m has been assessed as adequate for initial construction, with provision for widening on an as-required basis built into future maintenance cost estimates. The effect of this narrower formation width, suggested originally by Canadian Pacific, is to reduce the initial volume of bulk earthworks and selected fuel requirements by some 20% to 25%. It has the further effect of reducing the typical culvert length, thus reducing construction costs.

A review by the Railway Executive Group of alternative ballast depths, subgrade strengths, sleeper spacing and sleeper types established a preferred track structure. On the basis of present ballast and track-laying estimates and current supply prices, steel sleepers would be the most economical. Although competitive tendering could result in concrete sleepers being chosen, construction cost estimates are based on steel sleepers. As noted earlier, the review of timber sleepers revealed that price, durability and handling problems would be sufficient to discount that option.

The estimated cost of rails is based on a BHP quotation for new 50 kg rail that is expected to be used for all main line track. BHP has confirmed that it could supply rail at the rate required for the preferred construction program. All sidings and loops have been assumed to utilise lighter rail acquired from Australian National Railways from the former NAR line. The possible use of short, second-hand rails from north America has also been investigated. However, higher track-laying costs, the depreciation of the Australian dollar and a very competitive price indicated by BHP have combined to remove the cost advantage perceived earlier. Nevertheless the option should be kept under review in case any or all of these more favourable conditions should change.

The preferred construction program envisages a 4-year design and construction period commencing in 1987 with track-laying starting at both Alice Springs and Darwin. A detailed review by the international track-laying experts, Barclay Bros Ltd, has confirmed that a track-laying rate of 8 km per week on each of these fronts could be sustained, implying a total track-laying time of well under 30 months. The report has assumed, for conservative estimate purposes, that the full 30 months will be taken. The group and its consultants are confident that the project can be completed within 4 years, provided it is undertaken on a project management basis which allows design, supply and construction to proceed simultaneously.

As I stated in June, the work done by the Railway Executive Group and its expert consultants will allow a flying start to be made because so much of the preparatory work that otherwise would occupy time at the outset of the project has been done already. With the tabling of the group's report today, the results of this work will be available to all who would seriously contemplate participating in the project.

In all, it is estimated that the line will cost \$610m, measured in today's dollars. That figure contains over \$30m in contingency allowances to meet unforeseen expenditures that will crop up in the course of design and construction. The estimate also includes an appropriate provision for site allowances which will form an inescapable part of labour costs for a project of this nature in the regions it will transverse. A notable cost saving has been identified in the use of available second-hand locomotives and rolling stock for construction purposes.

To keep the total sum in perspective, honourable members will recall that, in its September 1985 report to the Northern Territory government, Canadian Pacific spoke of a 'lowest initial cost' railway costing in the region of \$500m over 3 years and a 'base case' of around \$550m spent over 4 years. The infamous Hill Inquiry used a figure closer to \$600m.

It is important to note that all these estimates were based upon wage rates and material crises prevailing in 1983. After allowing for inflation over the intervening 3 years, it is apparent that the Railway Executive Group has defined a project which is at least as economical as the lowest 'initial cost version' sketched by Canadian Pacific. Further, it avoids the vulnerability of that version's condensed construction program to unexpected supply and other problems. It is a lower cost option than Canadian Pacific's 'base case' which, in today's dollars, would be approaching \$700m. The Hill version would long since have passed that mark. I note, simply for perspective in terms of national projects, that the new Parliament House in Canberra is set to exceed \$1000m in total cost. I will turn briefly now to the report's findings on likely services, equipment requirements and cost of running the completed railway.

The operating plan used by the Railway Executive Group for projection purposes makes provision in a number of areas. The railway is to handle wagon-load freight business to and from a small number of centres. Anything less than a wagon-load will first need to be consolidated by customers, including freight wholesalers. There are to be no scheduled passenger services. The railway is to connect with, and cooperate closely with, the Australian National Railway system at Alice Springs and, through ANR, with the rest of the Australian standard gauge network. Minimum manning practices will provide for 2-man crews in the trains and railway staff employed only at Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin. Initial rolling stock requirements, except for locomotives, are to be met mainly from equipment used during construction and from surplus equipment available elsewhere.

After taking account of the projected volume and composition of the railway freight task described earlier, and making certain technical assumptions regarding train sizes and operating characteristics, the report envisions an initial railway service comprising 5 double locomotive trains per week between Alice Springs and Darwin, and a further 3 single locomotive trains per week between Mataranka and Darwin. Future freight expansion is projected to be met by a combination of more frequent and bigger trains requiring up to 3 locomotives each.

Initial equipment purchases for the line, comprising new locomotives, rolling stock, freight handling, track maintenance and other equipment, are projected to cost \$24m in 1986 dollars. This figure allows for a substantial amount of rolling stock and track maintenance equipment to be transferred from construction at no additional cost to the project.

Total operating and maintenance costs for the line have been estimated at \$23.6m in 1986 dollars in the first year of operation. Allowance is made within that figure for the marginally higher operating costs arising from the adoption of the NAR alignment north of Katherine, as well as provision for the cost of widening the track formation where operational experience shows this to be required. The estimates have been checked with ANR, particularly against its experience with the Tarcoola to Alice Springs line.

Honourable members will have noted that projected operating and maintenance costs of \$23.6m fall well inside projected revenue of \$31.5m in the first year of operation. I have anticipated publicly that the railway will generate an operating surplus from the outset. Now we have an estimate of the size of that initial operating surplus, namely \$8m in today's dollars. That is an encouraging start. I believe no rail system in Australia, with the exception of the dedicated iron ore lines of Western Australia and the coal lines in Queensland, can claim to make an operating surplus. Certainly, it cannot be claimed by the author of the Hill Report who, during his term as Chief Executive of the New South Wales Railways Authority, was widely applauded for containing his system's operating loss to only \$1m per day.

Another encouraging result is that the operating surplus on the Alice Springs to Darwin line is projected to grow, in real terms, at over 6% per year or more than double the assumed rate of growth in tonnage carried, as overhead expenses are spread more widely and economies of scale in operations come into effect. At that rate of increase, the operating surplus in 1986 dollars doubles within the first 12 years of operation and reaches almost \$25m in 1986 dollars after 20 years of operation.

At first sight, the discouraging result is the finding that these accumulating operating surpluses do not appear to pay, within that 20-year

period, for the costs of building and equipping the line. Measured in constant 1986 dollars, there is no doubt about it. During the first 20 years of operation, accumulated operating surpluses are projected to contribute only \$303m toward the \$610m construction cost, the \$24m spent initially to equip the line and a further \$55m required in subsequent years to expand and replace equipment as use of the line grows. I say 'do not appear to pay' but, when allowance is made for the inflation that inevitably will occur, and costs and outlays are inflated to future dollars rather than 1986 dollars, the project becomes substantially cash positive. That is to say that, over 20 years, it will generate more than enough cash, after operating expenses have been met, to recoup all construction and equipment costs and still have something left over. Essentially, this happens because future revenues are boosted by inflation, but construction costs are not, having been sunk into the project at the outset.

Mr Speaker, this is not done with mirrors, nor does it require any great financial sophistication to appreciate. It simply reflects what home buyers and project sponsors have always known in times of inflation: that building something with today's dollars and paying for it with tomorrow's dollars has generally been a good deal, provided the cost of financing is kept to reasonable levels. Of course, that final proviso is the key to the whole matter. If that 'something left over' after meeting operating costs is not enough to service the debt and equity funds raised to finance the capital cost, the project will not proceed.

In the case of our project, the Railway Executive Group puts it quite brutally: the railway will be totally unattractive, as a strictly commercial venture, over the period covering construction and the first 12 years of operation, since the net cash flow over that time will be negative. This should come as no surprise to anyone. This is a long-term infrastructure development project and it would be quite unreasonable to expect it to pay for itself within only 12 years, a limited time horizon set more by banks than by the project. The real surprise should be that, on the generally cautious projections made in this report, it takes only another 6 years to reach that position.

That in itself is not enough. The project must have also the capacity to service, at acceptable rates of interest or dividend payments, the funds raised to meet the projected cash flow deficiency over the early years. Again, the Railway Executive Group is quite blunt about what its cash flow projections indicate: the railway will turn substantially cash-positive, but the internal rate of return, a nominal 2% per annum over 24 years, will be unattractive to potential equity investors.

It is important to note the phrase 'potential equity investors' in that statement. What the report is saying is that we cannot reasonably expect a profit-seeking entrepreneur, faced with prospective earnings limited to the revenue projections of this report, to invest enough to satisfy the project's cash needs from the commencement of construction because the return on that investment, over quite a long period of years, would be inadequate.

It is also important not to lose sight of the fact that there is a servicing capacity there, and the test of the project sponsors and financiers will be to stretch the use of that available cash to its limit. One way to do that is to rearrange the after-tax cash flows of the project in a way which lowers sharply the expected cost of funds, for example, as is done in a leverage lease. Another is to attract into the project equity investors who are prepared to accept very low or very late dividends, as could happen if

such investors were to perceive substantial, indirect advantages for returns from equity participation. Of course, it is possible that, even fully stretched in such ways, the project's net cash flow will prove inadequate for a time and will need supplementing. This is the approach taken by the Railway Executive Group's financial consultant, Wardley Australia Ltd, in its assessment of alternative funding structures, when it assumes that the government will contribute a substantial amount up-front, make annual top-up contributions and guarantee that lenders will be taken out of the transaction at the scheduled time. A deal of testing of the alternatives remains to be done before my government will consider entering into commitments of the magnitude suggested by that analysis.

Honourable members will note, however, the concluding remark in the report of the Railway Executive Group that the equity partnership funding structure can be refined to further reduce the assumed government contributions. That is a promising start on the financial engineering but much more needs to be recognised about the project before that task goes too much further.

Firstly, this a project which will generate great national and public benefits. As I and my predecessors have pointed out many times before, that was recognised in the federal government's legislated responsibility to build a line, which dates back to 1911. Legal obligations aside, Canadian Pacific has established a convincing economic case for the line being built as a national project. Substantial resource savings and railway earnings will accrue outside the Northern Territory once goods can be put directly onto trains at their point of origin in Adelaide, Sydney or Melbourne for the through trip to Darwin or even perhaps to ports beyond. Substantial savings will occur also as less resources are used in road maintenance, not only in the Northern Territory but also in the states through which trucks pass on their way to their destinations.

I remind honourable members again of the calculation made by Canadian Pacific that the railway would save the nation more than 2000 million litres of fuel over 50 years. At today's prices, that would even pay for the Parliament House in Canberra, much less our railway. It follows that there is sound justification on both economic and equity grounds for the long-term investment of public funds in the line, not just by the Territory but by the federal government and by those states which stand to benefit in a very real way.

Before leaving the point, I wish to deplore the style of response, last seen expressed in the Dibb Report on Australia's defence, which accepts the sort of advantages I have described but takes the stand that no contribution need be made towards the costs of achieving them because someone else will pay for the railway anyway. Are we supposed to accept blindly that every dollar in the present defence budget achieves a better return in terms of defence preparedness than a dollar spent on completing Australia's standard gauge rail network, particularly when so much of our defence orientation is northwards? I think not, and I have not the slightest doubt that the services of the railway would be requisitioned the moment our defenders thought they were needed. While I am sure Territorians would be prepared to play their part in enabling that to happen, it would be grossly inequitable if they were to shoulder the entire cost.

The second concluding point is that the railway will generate substantial benefits to the private sector over and above the public and external benefits I have described. These will accrue to the builders who make profits from the construction of the line, the steelmakers who supply the rail and probably the



sleepers as well, the equipment suppliers who supply the locomotives and rolling stock, and the financiers who put the funding package together. They will accrue also to transport operators who will have at their disposal at long last a truly national standard gauge rail network. This list of private beneficiaries does not stop there. The report indicates a number of areas where private sector involvement could be both efficient and profitable; for example, the overhaul of locomotives and rolling stock by private contractors and even the contracting out of labour and management needs at a majority of stations that do not require full-time staffing.

The possible role for private enterprise in this railway is limited only by the imagination and entrepreneurial spirit of the potential participants. My government will put no barriers in their way if they have the substance and staying power required. Indeed, we will give them every assistance within our power. As I have indicated before, that could extend, if required, to a shareholding by the Northern Territory government in the private company or companies set up to own and operate the railway. Following discussions that have recently reopened, I would hope that, in due course, we will see equally helpful commitments on the parts of the federal and South Australian governments. Let me state my government's position quite clearly: whilst not excluding the possibility of Northern Territory government participation, our first and principal objective is to have the line built, owned and operated wholly by private enterprise.

Mr Speaker, my third and final point in conclusion is that, while my government has accepted the report of the Railway Executive Group in its entirety and has no qualms whatsoever about the degree of professionalism and the amount of common sense that have been put into preparing it, it should not be assumed that we or the group consider any technical or financial options closed off at this stage. If someone wants to put it to us that the better solution is a gas-fired train or an electrified system or a different route, or indeed any other variation which can be shown to make sense and to be financially sound, then we are perfectly prepared to sponsor that better solution. Discussions with potential participants and the testing of alternatives has never ceased and will now accelerate. About the only option that we have closed off is that of not having the Alice Springs to Darwin railway at all.

Since the report I have tabled has confirmed to my government that there is a basic railway task that can be effected in a realistic and economical way, in a very real sense, it is up to the private sector, particularly those members of it who know more than we do about transportation, construction, finance and the running of railways, to set about building on the foundation that we have established and to join us in taking the next step towards finishing the job.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, at the outset of my contribution to this debate, I must say how disappointing it is that the government did not see fit to give any prior notice whatsoever to the opposition concerning this important statement from the Railway Executive Group. As I understand it, the report of the Railway Executive Group has been available since the end of September. For some strange reason, that I do not pretend to understand, the report was not made available to me nor to any member of the opposition, despite the fact that, on a number of occasions, we have expressed considerable interest in examining the report. The 2 hours we have had since the report became available has not been sufficient time for us

to make a proper assessment of it and, unfortunately, that means my contribution to this debate will be poorer than it otherwise might have been.

The other thing that concerns me is that the government has seen fit to show the report to people outside the Territory; for example, it has shown it to the Premier of South Australia. The government gave him a copy of the report and, obviously, it has distributed copies of the report at Commonwealth level. This morning, copies of the report were distributed to the press before it was tabled in this Assembly.

Mr Dale: We gave it to interested parties only. We knew that you were not interested.

Mr SMITH: I would like to pick up the comment of the Minister for Community Development. If that is the attitude that he takes to this debate, I would say that we have little chance of getting a railway line.

One thing that is clear from the report of the Railway Executive Group is that, essentially, we are in the position that we were in 3 or 4 years ago: if the railway project is to get off the ground, a government contribution will be required. In the section of the report on funding options, every possibility detailed by the consultant, Wardley Australia, assumed government funding in some manner or other. At page 135, the report states: 'For each of the alternative structures (other than full funding by Northern Territory government borrowing) Wardley assumed that the government would provide an initial substantial funds injection towards the cost of the project'. It goes on to say: 'Wardley found that each funding structure would require, in addition, annual cash "top-ups" by the government to ensure a commercial rate of return to the financial institutions funding the net cash requirements of the project'. Finally, it says that 'a guaranteed "take-out" payment or refinancing of the residual, could also be required at the assumed conclusion of the financing period in the year 2002'.

We have had a number of inquiries into the railway and we are no further advanced now in terms of how we are to fund it than we were 3 or 4 years ago. It was clear then, when this government rejected the 60-40 proposal, that there was a requirement for a government contribution towards the funding of the railway line. On the evidence presented to us in this report and the Chief Minister's accompanying statement, it is equally clear that the railway line is not a goer without government funding.

Mr Finch: The feds promised 100%.

Mr SMITH: I know the federal government promised 100% before the election campaign and reneged on that. It deserves criticism for it. It also offered a 60-40 deal which, in retrospect, might have been a reasonable deal for the Territory.

I found the Chief Minister's contribution to the debate this morning disappointing in that, although the fact was staring him in the face that some sort of government contribution would be required, he did not address that. The government is still flirting with the idea that the whole thing can be financed privately and that was the up-beat note at the end of the Chief Minister's address. Unfortunately, that went against the whole tenor of the previous 20-odd pages of the statement: that it is not possible to provide a commercial rate of return to the operators without a government contribution.

I have said consistently, as did the previous Leader of the Opposition, that the Labor Party's position is that there is room for a government contribution to the building of the railway line. We supported the 60-40 proposition when it was proposed. We still support a Northern Territory government contribution to the funding of the railway line, but on the basis of a couple of pretty definite limitations. One is that the funding must be directed towards the capital construction of the railway line, and the other that we should not be involved in any way in annual top-up grants, as Wardley Australia calls them, to ensure that we are not in an operating deficit situation. That is the really disturbing thing about the Wardley report. Basically, it is saying that, without an annual government top-up, the railway will not operate on a commercial basis. That is the point of my concern and the reason why I think this document demonstrates that it will be a pretty difficult proposition to get the project off the ground.

The major contribution made by this document is that it has injected a healthy dose of realism into what we are talking about when we discuss the railway line. In retrospect, I think we also owe David Hill an apology.

Mr Dondas: He's going to bugger up the ABC.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Transport and Works will withdraw that remark.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, I withdraw that remark unreservedly.

Mr SMITH: It is quite clear that, under the terms of reference given to David Hill, his was a thorough economic study and his conclusions have stood the test of time. This report is saying that, even on a much-reduced level of track, using second-hand locomotives, having no passenger trains and running trains only when carriages are full, the railway still cannot be made a commercial proposition. David Hill was talking about a first-class railway system, operating on much higher standards with a passenger service and providing a regular freight service, not an irregular one as this proposal tends to suggest. I am saying that, given the terms of reference that David Hill had, he did a pretty good job and his report has stood the test of time. The sooner we recognise that, the better off we will all be.

The good thing about the Railway Executive Group report is that it does inject a healthy dose of realism into what we are about and what prospects we have of obtaining a railway line in the Northern Territory. There are some interesting things that I want to point out quickly. I am not attempting to denigrate the report at all because I have not studied it closely enough to do that even if I wanted to. However, I am a little concerned about some of the statements on page 4. It says that it is working its base year pay load projections on a couple of assumptions. One is that the tariffs on the Alice Springs to Darwin railway will be 20% to 25% lower than present road rates for comparable freight tasks. I have no trouble with that statement. However, there is no guarantee that, if there were alternative ways of delivering freight, the present road rates might not decrease quite significantly. Although it is probably true to say that rail will generally be preferred to road for carriage of bulk cargo over long distances, I think the road industry has developed considerable expertise in that area and it does not pay to underestimate its continuing capacity to do that sort of thing.

It is interesting that the report has moved away from the notion, propounded by the member for Barkly, that we could solve our sleeper problem by scouring the world for unused second-hand sleepers. It is useful, and

certainly an incentive to the rest of Australia, that the report recommends that we involve BHP quite closely in the construction of the railway sleepers. Obviously, the more of the construction work that can be done within Australia and the greater the supply of new materials for the line, the more attractive a proposition it will be to the rest of Australia.

Once again, I need to make the point that we are talking about a completely different railway from that which was discussed 4 to 5 years ago. We are talking now about a railway of a much lower standard, that will not carry passenger traffic and, as I read the report, whose trains will run only when their compartments are full. In other words, if my interpretation is correct, there will be no half loads. That means we will not have a railway that will operate on a regular basis.

Mr Dondas: What negative thinking. How do we know it will not be full every day?

Mr SMITH: I am not criticising that; I am saying that that is one of the assumptions that this report is based on. It is a far cry from the original proposal of 4 or 5 years ago, and that is why the public perception of the railway has changed quite significantly over the past few years. I think considerable public enthusiasm will be lost when it becomes clearer what the concept is.

Mr Speaker, another interesting thing about the Wardley assumption was that it went back to this old justification for a railway, and I quote from page 135:

The key to financing the railway will, therefore, lie in recognition of the national benefits and externalities to flow from the project, and hence the justification for significant and patient public and private sector equity in the project.

Again, that is a pretty difficult argument. I accept that it is a logical argument and that, if we have a railway line in the Northern Territory, it is quite clear there will be national benefits. The national railway system will benefit. But it is a pretty difficult argument with which to convince the Commonwealth and the states, which already have railways which are not making any money, that they ought to put money into another railway in a place outside their own territorial borders.

Mr Dondas: That 60% from the federal government would be fine.

Mr SMITH: Unfortunately, offers of that kind are not repeated every year. Clearly, now that the Territory government has refused the offer, it will not be repeated. In the years to come, we might well regret having refused that offer.

Mr Speaker, obviously, when opposition members have read the Railway Executive Group's report more closely, there will be further comments to be made. However, I wish to ask the government whether the full report of the Railway Executive Group has been presented to this Assembly. I have heard from a number of sources that the full report of the Railway Executive Group is a much thicker document and that we poor citizens of the Northern Territory, who do not expect to be told the full truth, are getting a sanitised version of it. I would like someone on the government side to tell me whether, in fact, this is the full Railway Executive Group report or, as I said, a sanitised version.

It would be interesting if the government were prepared to table what I understand is a Treasury comment on the Alice Springs to Darwin proposal as outlined in this document. Although we have what seems, on the surface of it, to be a sane and sensible report, it is important for the full debate of this proposal - to enable informed decisions to be made - that we be certain that we are debating the full report and that any other internal government reports commenting on this report are made available so that we have the full picture because, if we take decisions without being in possession of all the facts, we will lose out quite badly. That was made evident as a result of the approach taken by the previous 2 Chief Ministers who were not interested in revealing the full picture, but only those parts that suited them. As a result of their pie-in-the-sky approach, the prospect of the railway has been put back a number of years and possibly even further than that. Simply because they were wearing rose-tinted glasses and did not bother to do their homework, it has taken this amount of time to get a realistic report.

In conclusion, I welcome the report. From what I can gather, it provides a rational and sensible basis for future debate on the railway line. It is a somewhat gloomy document in that it does not provide an easy answer to the funding of the railway line. Plainly it takes us back 3 or 4 years in terms of funding options. The next step is for the Northern Territory government to state quite clearly whether it is prepared to make a financial contribution to the railway line or not. Until that decision is made and announced, people in the Northern Territory will not know what is happening, and potential private financiers will not have a sound basis for their own projections. I call on the Northern Territory government to make a firm decision on whether it will provide funds to the railway line, and to announce that decision.

Debate adjourned.

# TABLED PAPER Report of Publications Committee

Mr SETTER (Jingili)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I table the second report of the Publications Committee and move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

## SHIRE OF LITCHFIELD (TRANSITIONAL RATING) BILL (Serial 229)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

This bill represents the fulfilment of a commitment given to the people of the Shire of Litchfield during negotiations with them for the introduction of local government in that area. The commitment given in 1985 to the people of what is now the Shire of Litchfield had 3 elements: first, rates would not exceed \$105 per annum in areas zoned RL1, and \$55 per annum in areas zoned RL2; secondly, these levels would be maintained for 3 years; and, thirdly, the rates would be assessed not on land value but on a 'flat' system based on the geographical location of land.

Members of the Assembly will be aware that the policy behind this bill is different to that on which the provisions of part V of the Local Government Act are based. That act provides no opportunity for Northern Territory

government direction in the manner of setting rates. Neither does the Local Government Act allow for general rates to be levied on other than the value of land. The government has not abandoned the policy supporting the Local Government Act. This bill is a transitional measure designed to ensure that the burden imposed on the people of Litchfield Shire does not become unreasonable during the early years of the shire's operation.

This government honours its commitments. It has been criticised for an apparent failure to honour the commitment I have outlined. This bill will honour that commitment whilst maintaining the government's strong thrust towards the clear and unequivocal devolution of the power of local government, particularly with respect to revenue raising.

This bill is reasonably simple in its effect. It will override the effect of those provisions of the Local Government Act which would allow the Litchfield Shire Council to set rates. The rates will be set at specified levels. The Litchfield Shire Council has set its rates, under the provisions of the Local Government Act, for the 1986-87 financial year. It has set rates for the Howard Springs, Knuckey's Lagoon, Humpty Doo and Bees Creek wards at \$105 and for the wards of Noonamah, Acacia Hills, Berry Springs and Darwin River at \$55. This bill will ensure that these rate levels remain in place until the 1989-90 financial year.

A most important aspect of this bill is the sunset clause - clause 2. The act will expire automatically on 1 July 1989. As I have said, this is a transitional arrangement. The government has no intention whatsoever of abandoning the principle of equity on which the Local Government Act is properly based. We accept that it is necessary to ensure that undue burdens are not placed on the people of Litchfield Shire in the early years of local government in the area. We cannot accept, however, that a group of Northern Territory ratepayers will receive continued favoured treatment at the expense of other ratepayers. The automatic expiry of the effect of this proposed legislation on 1 July 1989 will preclude that.

Mr Speaker, I take the opportunity to foreshadow the government's intention to pass this legislation through all stages during these sittings. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

#### MINERAL ROYALTY AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 237)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, originally it was the government's intention to introduce legislation to amend the Mineral Royalty Act during the June sittings of the Assembly. In the light of industry requests for more time to examine the proposals and our own tight timetable, it was not possible to introduce the legislation until the present sittings. I have written to industry associations and those companies that participated in the review advising them of the government's proposals.

It is now nearly 4 years since the Territory's Mineral Royalty Act came into force. It is a profits-based royalty regime which is innovative and

contains many positive features for both government and industry and which, since its enactment, has generated considerable comment. When the member for Fannie Bay assumed the portfolio of Mines and Energy in December 1984, he initiated an internal departmental review of the act. While the review was to be wide-ranging, the department was instructed to examine specifically whether the administration of the existing system could be simplified, whether a profits-based regime was appropriate and whether a lower royalty rate would attract greater exploration and mining activity under the act.

The review resulted in the publication of the discussion paper in June 1985 and that was circulated to the industry. It was clear from the response that the mining industry, its associations, the vast majority of companies, a considerable body of academic opinion and even members of the opposition agree that the profits-based royalty regime is a fair and equitable method of levying royalty. If a mining venture makes profits, it pays a percentage of those profits in a royalty. Correspondingly, if that venture falls on hard times, due to falling commodity prices, increased costs, adverse commodity prices, adverse exchange rates or other factors and fails to make a profit, then no royalty is paid. Recently, the principle of profit-related royalty taxation was supported by the Minister for Resources and Energy, Senator Gareth Evans, at the May 1986 Minerals Outlook Seminar of the Australian Mining Industry Council, when he stated:

The federal government is intent on continuing the shift to profit-based resource taxation methods and away from the production-based and ad valorem system that characterises state and some Commonwealth resource taxation systems. Such a move will, however, require the consent and cooperation of the state governments, and we are working on it.

Although the 1985 review of the Mineral Royalty Act enhanced support for a profits-based royalty, it did reveal areas of industry concern, well reflected in the NT Chamber of Mines' own submission that the royalty rate is too high, the definition of profit needs changing, the cost of final mine rehabilitation should be deductible and certain changes should be made to improve administrative provisions in the legislation.

The changes the government now proposes respond in large measure to industry views and should be welcomed by the industry. Although it is not proposed to alter the existing 18% royalty rate, the government proposes to provide major concessions by way of changes to items of expenditure eligible for deduction within the royalty rate. The admission of these concessions and other changes to the royalty system will allow major advantages to accrue to companies in the Northern Territory. The government will now allow deductability of capital and interest costs and rehabilitation and employee severance expenditure in the calculations of profit. Combined with improved administrative processes and the intrinsic equity of the profits-based system, these deductions will provide substantial incentive to industry within the same percentage rate.

In looking at the proposed changes, the government investigated practices followed elsewhere. It should be recognised that it is extremely difficult to compare intrinsically different royalty regimes and to weigh, for instance, profit-based systems against unit or value of production royalties. However, our studies identified discrete production units in the Territory and applied the 18% royalty to the projected profits which, in turn, were converted for comparative purposes to equivalent ad valorem rates.

These studies did not lend support to industry demands for the royalty rate to be reduced to less than half the present level. At the royalty rate of 7% demanded by industry, NT royalties would be among the lowest in Australia. There is no reason to expect that such a deep cut would promote, of itself, a corresponding rise in exploration and development. To put it in clear and unmistakable terms, the cost to royalty revenue over a 10-year time frame for each 1% reduction in the royalty rate below the present 18% level could be in the order of \$8m or, on average, some \$0.8m per year. If it could be shown or reasonably expected that new mine developments in response to the rate cut alone were able to generate the additional revenues in the future to offset the cuts requested at present, the decision would be justifiable and easy to make. Despite an invitation to the industry to do so, such a justification has not been demonstrated. There are strong grounds for believing that the prime impediment to exploration is access to land that is denied through Commonwealth policies. One must admire the perseverance of the mining industry which, like the people of the Territory, is at the forefront of attack through discriminatory policies of the federal government on Aboriginal land rights, national parks and uranium. Is it any wonder that the industry is frustrated by the day-to-day decisions of the federal Labor government which, to appease the extremist factions within its ranks, locks away the enormous resources of the Territory which could lead to the recovery of the nation's economy through export dollar earnings?

Justification for the industry-suggested rate is not demonstrated by the survey data compiled by the Australian Mining Industry Council for the mining industry. Analysis of this data highlights the fact that, for the 9-year period of AMIC surveys to 1985, on average the royalties paid represented 19.8% of the mining industry profits. That is marginally above the Territory's 18% rate. Also of importance is that the AMIC data provides a demonstration of the intrinsic advantages of the profits-based royalty system. It shows that, if a given revenue was to be raised through either a profits-based system or an ad valorem system, over the 9-year period, the profits-based system would have been markedly lighter in periods of adverse economic conditions, such as exist at the present time, with the poor outlook for the mining sector.

I table an information paper for the interest of honourable members. It reflects the studies undertaken and referred to above but does not include those studies based on confidential company information or all details accommodated in this bill. It further explains the changes in deductions allowable which bring about a significant effective lowering of the royalty burden at the unchanged nominal 18% royalty rate.

Since that discussion paper was released, further consultation with the industry resulted in concern being raised in relation to the basis of determination of profit for royalty purposes. Following consideration of those additional concerns, the government accepted the need for alterations to the profit basis to endorse further deductions allowing for the accrual of employee benefits on termination of mining, the accrual of operating costs, the deductability of tenement rentals, the deductability of statutory compensation in respect of land and the deductability of certain lease acquisition costs.

A major factor in the effective lowering of the royalty burden is the proposed treatment of interest and depreciation. The industry has sought continued recognition of depreciation and interest in the definition of 'profit' and changes to the depreciation basis for the Mineral Royalty Act. The government agrees that deductability of interest and depreciation should



continue in the determination of profit. However, to avoid a number of problems associated with the recognition of capital expenditure and interest charges, it is proposed to encapsulate such charges in a single, periodical, capital recognition deduction, better known as CRD. Such a deduction would stand in place of all depreciation and interest deductions allowable on an asset-by-asset basis. The CRD concept is commonly encountered in mortgage repayments where a single equal monthly payment recovers both capital and interest. In the case of CRD, a 6-monthly deduction is envisaged in line with the 6-monthly basis for royalty payments. Incorporated within the CRD payments will be an assumed interest rate, generally of 2% above the long-term bond rate. Just as mortgage instalments may be varied to take account of interest rate charges, so too may CRD. Once determined for an asset, it could be varied periodically to take account of changes in prevailing rates of interest. The CRD concept gives full recognition to all capital and interest charges on eligible items and ensures that royalty is levied only after all allowances for costs of funds. Because of this, the move to the CRD will greatly improve the operation of the act from the equity and neutrality standpoints.

In accordance with industry submissions on depreciation, an appropriate period of applying CRD against most assets is considered to be 5 years. In detail, there will be 3 categories of capital assets recognised with different periods over which the CRD deduction will be made. These are specified in the information paper that I have tabled. The amount of the CRD allowable is independent of the actual arrangements entered into by the royalty payer. No benefit will accrue to a royalty payer for contriving to use high gearing or any special forms of borrowing within a corporate group to minimise his royalty liabilities. This measure should be recognised as an innovative and generous concession which should do away with much administrative effort in structuring schemes by the royalty payer and in the checking and challenging of such schemes by the government administration.

Other changes have been sought by industry and are being considered now by the government. These include allowing deductability, for profit calculation, of all costs and outgoings arising pursuant to statutory requirements and allowing as deductions accruals in respect of employee benefits. The extension of this approach to rehabilitation costs on termination of mining is also under consideration. If the requested changes are adopted, the industry will be consulted in the establishment of benchmarks.

The government gave consideration to the question of exempting the production of gold from royalty. Only Western Australia and Victoria exempt gold from royalty. Currently, in Western Australia, this exemption is under consideration as part of that state's overall review of its returns from minerals. We have decided to treat it as a commodity no different from other minerals. We continue to play our part in encouraging small operators by exempting ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation.

Mr B. Collins: Tell us about your gold tax.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is the second of 3 cautions.

Mr COULTER: We continue to play our part in encouraging small operators by exempting from royalty the first \$50 000 of profit. Also, the government has acceded to an industry request that, for administrative efficiency and equity reasons, the profit for royalty base should be closer to 'book' or

'accounting profits'. Accordingly, the definition of 'profit' in the act will be altered so that it accords more closely with that determined under generally-accepted accounting principles.

The industry expressed concern at the number of items in the royalty calculations that are subject to secretarial or ministerial discretion. While a review of royalty legislation in other states does not support this contention, the point was taken by the government. The amendments reduce the areas of discretion and go further to allow a royalty payer to seek and obtain a written and binding determination of how allowable deductions in the royalty payer's particular circumstances will be interpreted ahead of project development and before expenditure is incurred. This could require the use of considerable resources on the part of the government, and hence will need to be monitored closely in its operation. Also, to counter any attempt to exploit loopholes for royalty avoidance purposes that the elimination of discretions may leave open, a general anti-avoidance provision will be inserted. Thus, while facilitating the negotiation of allowable deduction prior to commencement of production, there will be provision for variations of a determination in case of avoidance.

The industry has also asked that private royalties paid be treated as deductible costs. It is Commonwealth, not Territory, policy that endorses the concept of private royalties going to Aborigines in respect of mining on Aboriginal land. This represents an abrogation of the Crown's ownership of minerals on behalf of the whole community, and is not a concept that is acceptable to this government. Industry representatives have asked that such royalties be offset against profits with a resulting revenue loss to the Territory. The only way that this would be acceptable to this government is if full recompense were provided by the Commonwealth.

One of the major objectives in carrying out a review of the legislation was to simplify the act. Accordingly, the government has incorporated a number of changes in the bill which are largely of an administrative nature. These include: deletion of the reference to a 'prescribed' fee for the substitution of exploration expenditure certificates; that written notice be given for transfer of exploration expenditure certificates; the exclusion of minerals mined for use in the extractive industry; provision for notification of the secretary as to the description of the project production unit and the royalty year; and a provision removing the possibility of double claiming of expenditure. In addition, the government proposes that the legislation be effective from 1 July 1986 to allow for the calculation of the royalty payment for a full financial year.

All new mine developments will come under the amended act automatically, as will existing mines at the next renewal of their tenements. Mines which committed capital under the 1982 act will come under the amended act from 1 July 1987 unless, before that date, they elect to remain under the 1982 act. The government believes that the concessions incorporated into the amendments proposed are advantageous, and that all projects will elect to come under the amended act.

In summary, the introduction of a capital recognition deduction and other changes to what constitutes the profit for royalty will result in an effective drop in the royalty rate. Combined with other measures, this will ensure that an efficient and improved Mineral Royalty Act will operate in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I want to emphasise the depth and the extensive nature of the consultative process that has taken place between industry and government so far and which will continue before the legislation is finalised. Chronologically, this has included: a departmental review document containing specific proposals; industry responses which were heeded and gave rise to the development of the CRD concept I referred to earlier; dissemination of the proposal via an information paper which, with an industry-department workshop and discussions with individual companies, provided much valuable feedback; and advanced distribution of the amending bill drafts, which are currently eliciting feedback and which gave rise to the latest initiatives I have referred to. The government still stands ready to listen to cogent and convincing argument from the industry to improve the royalty environment for it in the Territory. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members as an innovative and progressive piece of legislation.

Debate adjourned.

#### MOTION

#### Referral of Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act to Privileges Committee

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

1. the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act be referred to the Privileges Committee for inquiry and report on any amendments the committee may consider necessary to recommend to the Assembly;
2. for the purpose of the inquiry, the committee have power to send for persons, papers and records and to move from place to place;
3. the committee shall have leave to make interim reports to the Assembly on any matter which it deems to be of an urgent nature; and
4. unless otherwise ordered, the committee report to the Assembly no later than the first sitting day in August 1987.

Mr Speaker, with the exception of one minor area, the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act has not been reviewed since 1981, and a major review of the act has not been undertaken since self-government. In recent times, certain events have occurred which have directed my attention to the act. It has been brought to my notice that the parliamentary precincts, as established by section 15(1) and schedule 1 of the act, do not include members' parliamentary offices nor do they include certain offices of the staff of the Legislative Assembly. As I understand it, this is the only parliament in Australia in which such offices are outside the parliamentary precincts. The present parliamentary precincts were established in the days when members were accommodated in the demountable buildings.

Mr Speaker, a number of sections of the act make specific reference to the parliamentary precincts. For example, section 17(2) states: 'The Speaker may, at any time and whether the Assembly is sitting or not, direct that a person who is not a member be removed from the precincts'. However, because the parliamentary precincts are limited to their present boundaries, the Speaker has no statutory power to direct a person, who is not a member, be removed from the building housing members' offices. I believe this could create problems, and it needs examination.

removed from the building housing members' offices. I believe this could create problems, and it needs examination.

Honourable members may be aware that a privilege bill has been introduced into the Senate by the President of the Senate and it provides for quite heavy penalties if certain sections are contravened. As I understand it, it is planned for the bill to be passed through both Houses of federal parliament this year.

Section 4 of the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act provides that the powers and privileges of the Assembly, its members and its committees, not enumerated in the act, shall be the powers and privileges of the House of Representatives, its members and its committees. If the bill introduced in the Senate is passed, many of its provisions will have direct applicability to the powers and privileges of this Assembly, its members and its committees. However, I am given to understand that the relatively light penalties contained in the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act will have little effect compared to the more trenchant provisions of the Commonwealth legislation. I believe this needs consideration.

In addition, honourable members will be aware that a number of inquiries have been held into parliamentary privilege in Australian parliaments in recent years. In view of the differing attitudes to parliamentary privilege expressed by Australian members of parliament and by the Australian public, including the press, and since no full review of the act has been undertaken for many years, I believe that now is an appropriate time for the powers and privileges of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly to be reviewed.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the motion.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1986-87  
(Serial 218)

Continued from page 960.

In committee:

Appropriation for division 13:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have a number of questions and comments I wish to make on this division. Most, if not all of them, have been given to the Treasurer, but I cannot guarantee that his comments here today may not lead to more.

The first area that I want to touch on is that of debt charges. Over the years, the government has made much of the claim that it operates a balanced budget. In the 1985-86 budget speech, the then Treasurer said: 'Once again, the Territory has managed to balance the books'. This year, the Treasurer has said: 'As a first decision, we rejected the temptation to take the soft option and go into deficit budgeting for the first time in the Territory's history'. The simple fact of the matter appears to be that the government has achieved its laudable objective of balancing the books by borrowing money at an increasing rate.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics produces a comprehensive document entitled 'State and Local Government Finance Australia'. In that document,

the Australian Statistician analyses all state financial transactions and presents them in a directly comparable way. An examination of those official statistics, comparing the NT debt position to that of Australia generally, is most revealing. In 1979-80, the interest paid by all states amounted to \$2294m or \$157 per capita. In the Territory, the comparable interest payments were \$13.6m or \$117 per Territorian. In other words, in 1979-80, interest payments were \$157 per capita in the states and only \$117 in the Territory. However, by 1984-85, that position had been reversed. The interest paid, per capita, for all the states had risen to \$363 but, for the Territory, it had galloped ahead to \$507 per Territorian. In 6 years, the interest that each Territorian was paying on government loans had increased from \$117 to \$507. In the space of 6 short years, the Territory's financial managers have taken us from a position of being \$40 below the average interest paid per capita to a position of being \$144 above it.

The same rapid escalation in our debt position is shown in relation to borrowings. In 1979-80, net government borrowing per Territorian was \$268. By 1984-85, this had rocketed to \$534. This was the average debt incurred for every man, woman and child in the Northern Territory in that 1 year. No wonder the government has been able to balance the books. It has simply borrowed more and more money to cope. Just listen to this! By 1984-85, the annual interest payment of \$71.7m was only just exceeded by the new borrowing of \$75.3m. In other words, we were borrowing money to pay off the interest we had incurred on past loans.

My questions are these. Does the Treasurer accept the validity of the Bureau of Statistics figures or, if he disputes them, can he provide a consolidated statement showing the level of government indebtedness for the last 3 years, including that of all government agencies and instrumentalities? Secondly, given the very high and increasing level of public debt in the Northern Territory shown by these figures, can the Treasurer give an assurance that he will not continue to bail out the budget with borrowings? Thirdly, does the Treasurer have any limit in mind concerning the extent to which he will load Territorians with this debt burden? Fourthly, can the Treasurer explain the difference between borrowing money to balance the budget and deficit budgeting?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his questions. He gave them to me late yesterday afternoon and early this morning, and this has given me the opportunity to seek information from the department so that I can answer them in detail.

I do not dispute the figures that the Leader of the Opposition has put forward here today. At self-government, the Northern Territory had minimal debt. I think it was the member for Nhulunbuy who raised this issue just the other evening. We talked about the fact that at self-government the Northern Territory did not have a debt. The Memorandum of Understanding and the Grants Commission took into account the fact that the Northern Territory would assume a debt burden as it embarked on the early years of self-government. The Northern Territory had minimal debt in 1978. It was expected that that debt would rise rapidly in the early years and there was specific reference to this matter in the Memorandum of Understanding. Paragraphs 47, 74 and 75 of the Memorandum of Understanding refer to this particular point. It is nothing new. We knew it would happen. It was allowed for and calculated into the Memorandum of Understanding, and the Grants Commission also made allowances for it.

This debt has been built up from a number of sources, including semi-government borrowings, the loan portion of general purpose capital payments and debts associated with specific purpose payments, such as housing. By far the largest elements are the general purpose capital borrowings for which there has been a specific addition to the Territory's funding capacity to enable these debt servicing costs to be met. There is nothing unusual about these borrowings. They reflect normal state-type arrangements. If the Leader of the Opposition has a look at situations with the states and takes into account the \$6000m global limit which Mr Keating has imposed on us, he will find that borrowings of this nature are not unusual. They are not a crime and they are not to be looked at as if they presage nothing but gloom. They are a fact of life.

In answer to the Leader of the Opposition's second question, there is no suggestion that the budget is bailed out with borrowings. Borrowings are a normal part of federal-state financial relations and can be expected to grow in line with arrangements agreed on between the Commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory. I might add that our representative on the Loan Council is none other than the federal Treasurer, Hon Paul Keating himself, and these borrowings do have the approval of the federal government.

In response to his third question, there is no magic limit as suggested by the Leader of the Opposition. Ultimately, the level of debt is dependent upon the need for borrowing and the ability to service debt. As I mentioned, borrowings can be expected to grow in line with the arrangements agreed between the Commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory. Obviously the Northern Territory will manage its level of debt and ensure it has the capacity to service that debt.

This leads us on to the fourth point which relates to deficit budgeting. It is interesting to look at some of the states, particularly Victoria, as I mentioned the other evening. It is a good point in question. Financial economists throughout Australia believe that Victoria is in debt to the tune of \$300m, and that is deficit budgeting. It cannot pay for its loans; it is spending more than it receives. The word 'deficit' can mean a number of different things, but we are talking about a balanced budget as one where the total sources of funds, in any particular year, are matched by total outgoings. As borrowings are a normal part of state-type finances, I do not consider borrowings to mean funding a deficit. We are servicing those borrowings as part of the money that we receive within any one given budget area.

Mr SMITH: I am sure every householder will be interested in the Treasurer's definition.

Mr Coulter: Every householder pays off a loan.

Mr SMITH: But they do not say that they are working within a balanced budget.

Mr Chairman, I am intrigued by the Treasurer's remark that he expects borrowings in the Northern Territory to continue to grow. We already have by far the highest per capita level of borrowings and the highest per capita level of interest repayments in Australia. I think the people of the Northern Territory deserve some sort of explanation as to how much we can expect these borrowings to increase and how much we can expect the interest repayments to increase. All we have had is a broad statement that borrowings are expected to increase. Would the Treasurer like to be rather more specific and reassure Territorians about his intentions?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I thought I would contribute a few words to this debate.

Mr B. Collins: It is not a debate. A simple question was put to the Treasurer.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! All members of the Assembly have a right to contribute to the debate.

Mr PERRON: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

At the time of self-government, the Northern Territory really did not carry any debt as such because all funding in the Northern Territory was by direct appropriation from Commonwealth government departments. There was an exception in relation to the Housing Commission which was raising some revenue through rents and, therefore, could service loans to build houses. By and large, for ordinary state-type functions, the Commonwealth picked up the tab in total.

At self-government, the Northern Territory adopted broadly a state model of governmental accounting and so was required to be provided with the means to service loans. Two-thirds of capital works funding from the Commonwealth is provided by way of loans. The Northern Territory required a capacity to repay those loans if it was going to accept them. The Commonwealth government accepted that argument and provided a specific purpose payment to the Northern Territory - and I think it will be found in all former budgetary documents - which covered the Northern Territory's debt charges. Firstly, the Commonwealth approved how much the Northern Territory could borrow each year and, therefore, had some control over the affair and provided the financial capacity to the Northern Territory for debt servicing. That amount was calculated so that we could service the loans we raised. In 1985, that amount was added to the Northern Territory government's base funding and there it stays for evermore to escalate annually by the amount that the base funding escalates. It is important for the Assembly to be mindful that, in relation to the loans which have escalated quite dramatically since self-government, the Northern Territory has been provided with the capacity to repay those loans to the Commonwealth government.

In raising these questions, the opposition has used per capita figures supposedly to demonstrate that Northern Territorians are more in debt than other Australians and that the blame lies with their government. I would remind honourable members that, if they took per capita figures on the amount of assets funding that the government funds through loan programs, they would find that they were equally high relative to those in any state in Australia.

Perhaps I could give an example which has not appeared on the books as yet because the powerhouse is still being built. One does have to take into consideration the unique position of the Northern Territory. We are building a powerhouse to serve the needs of 50% of the Northern Territory's population. We have to build it in one hit out at Channel Island. We will adopt the loans to service that powerhouse when it commences operations, hopefully in the next few months. What state in Australia has ever been in the position of having to adopt, over a period of a few months, the loan servicing to supply electricity to 50% of its population? We are in that position and we cannot do very much about it. We must have a brand new powerhouse because of the mistakes made by the planners who put Stokes Hill power-station where it is. These are problems that we have inherited, but they are problems which have to be faced and tackled. I think that is a very good example of the unique position of the Northern Territory in regard to loans.

The Treasurer has explained fairly well the matter of deficit budgeting. I think the matter was raised facetiously by the opposition because it knows that every state government in Australia has always borrowed heavily on the basis that the assets will be there for a long period and future generations can share in the repayments for having those assets constructed. Of course, every state in Australia that boasts that it has a surplus or that it balances its budget or has a small deficit does so in the light of very substantial loan borrowings just as does the Northern Territory.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I thank the real Treasurer for that explanation, but my question is addressed to the person sitting on the frontbench who has some trouble answering these questions.

At the time of self-government, we had a very low loans profile, and I accept that it was part of the self-government exercise that we would move to a mature loans profile similar to that of the states. In the opinion of the Treasurer, do we have a mature loans profile now or can Northern Territorians expect to pay more because we take out additional loans?

Mr COULTER: Territorians will not be expected to pay more. The simple fact is that the federal government has said that the Territory will be treated as a state from 1988. Between them, the states of Australia borrowed \$4500m in 1984-85 and \$6000m in 1985-86. Until very recently, the Northern Territory has not been involved heavily in loan funding at all. However, we will be expected to take on the normal state-like approach to borrowing and receiving loan funding for projects and to service development costs as we enter into the state-like functions which are being placed upon us by the federal government. I am not saying that is right or wrong.

Recently, the Leader of the Opposition accompanied the Chief Minister on the statehood campaign. It is a simple fact of life that, as we enter into more state-type responsibilities, loans will be part of the picture. I cannot tell the Leader of the Opposition what the Northern Territory's global limit will be because I do not have a crystal ball. But I can say, as I told the member for Nhulunbuy the other evening at the close of the debate on the Appropriation Bill, that we did have a debt in 1978. We inherited a considerable debt. Provision was made for debts in the Memorandum of Understanding and it is a principle that is well understood by the Grants Commission. In future, we will perhaps have an increase in borrowing through loans.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I have listened with great patience to everything that the Treasurer has said and I appreciate that, with self-government, we inherited certain obligations. That is accepted. However, the fact is that, in 1979-80, after self-government, the Northern Territory owed substantially less per capita than the rest of Australia. At that time, the average debt burden per head of population in Australia was \$157. The corresponding figure for the Northern Territory was \$117. Any person with first grade mathematics would understand that we were \$40 in the black, so to speak, compared to the rest of Australia. Since that time, the average debt burden for each Australian has increased quite remarkably to \$363 per head of population. That is the debt burden that the average Australian carries.

I am sure that all state governments take out loans. There is no question about that. However, by the 1985-86 financial year, the Northern Territory's position had changed considerably. Our average per capita debt burden was \$507, compared with an average of \$363 for Australia. In other words, we have increased our per capita debt burden by \$144 more than the rest of



Australia. That is simple mathematics. What that means is that all those Taj Mahals and grandiose plans are riding us into the red.

The Treasurer can call that revenue-neutral budgeting or balanced budgeting or whatever. The fact is that we are rapidly spending ourselves into the ground. I appreciate that the power-station has to be funded somehow or other, but we are continuing to ride ourselves into the red at a greater rate than the rest of Australia. The Leader of the Opposition asked, quite reasonably, when this would stop. But, apparently, we are just going to keep running ourselves into the red! Is that what you are saying: we are going to keep driving ourselves into the red? You are crazy! You are a lunatic!

Mr DONDAS: Normally, during the committee stages of the Appropriation Bill, a minister would confine his remarks to his own portfolio responsibilities. However, I have to respond to the member for Nhulunbuy's lack of understanding of financial matters. He gave a comparison of our per capita debt in 1978 and our present debt in 1986. What he did not say was that, since self-government, we have built some 17 new schools in the Northern Territory and have had to expend funds on roads and other capital works because we inherited 60 years of neglect of the Northern Territory. During the last 6 years, the Northern Territory government spent something like 17% of its budget on housing. In 1978-79, we had a waiting time of some 4½ years for housing, not only in Darwin but in many other Territory centres. In 1986, the waiting time is about 12 months. We have some 38 000 schoolchildren in the Northern Territory today. At self-government, we had only 22 000. That is where the money is being spent.

Mr Ede: We acknowledge that, but when is it going to stop?

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, the honourable member wants the Territory's growth to stop. For the last 5 years, population growth in the Northern Territory has been the highest in Australia; it is at least 3 times higher than the national average. When is it going to stop? He is like his colleague, Senator Walsh, who wants to use a machine-gun to depopulate the north and the other silly goose, who operates out of Kalgoorlie, who wants to give the Northern Territory to Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. That is what he is advocating. Clearly, the honourable member opposite does not have a grasp of what is going on in this Chamber. He would be better off outside.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I understand that the interest burden, per capita, would relate back to a debt burden and the ratio would depend on the spread of various interest rates across the debt that had accumulated over a period. If a large proportion of debt were accumulated during a period of relatively high interest rates, the interest burden would be relatively higher, with a more historical spread, than if the debt were incurred when interest rates were lower.

Mr Coulter: Very good.

Mr EDE: I am glad you appreciate that point.

Mr Coulter: No, you just reminded me of something stupid you said.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I have one fairly easy question although I do not suppose that the Treasurer will be able to answer it off the top of his head. Will he indicate how much the Northern Territory owes and provide a list of the various loans, indicating the loan periods and the interest rates that are applicable?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I understand that a similar issue is being discussed by the Public Accounts Committee at the moment. It is fairly secretive, of course, and one is not privy to everything that the PAC discusses.

Mr Leo: That doesn't matter.

Mr Smith: So what? Are you trying to say the PAC is superior to the Assembly?

Mr B. Collins: Is this a new form of sub judice?

Mr COULTER: I am a little concerned about that, Mr Chairman.

I do not carry that information in my head and that sort of information is not freely available in the states. No state releases details of its contingent liabilities. Nobody can obtain that information from any other government in Australia today. That information is the property of the government and the business of the government.

Given the honourable member's scare tactics over dead cows, the radioactivity of gyro-compasses, the cyanide spill, the gas pipeline and Yirara College, the sort of information he issues and the nature of the headlines that result from his information, I would be inclined not to provide him with that kind of detail.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, because I am a member of the PAC I can confirm that certain information is before that committee, but that was not what the member for Stuart asked. He asked that the Treasurer give pertinent details of the actual liabilities - not the contingent but the actual liabilities - of this government. He was referring to the borrowings on which we pay interest. Because it is before the PAC does not make it sub judice or in some way secret. It is only a matter of whether or not the Treasurer is willing to do it. If he is not willing to do it, let him say so.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I am not willing to do it.

Mr Leo: Fine.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the cowboy approach of the Treasurer to the books of the Northern Territory never ceases to amaze me. We have raised a very serious question about the level of debt in the Northern Territory. I am prepared to accept that that is part of assuming self-government and part of the process of taking on state-type responsibilities. But, it is irresponsible in the extreme for the Treasurer, off the top of his head and without thinking through the consequences, to say that he is not prepared to provide this Assembly with a full statement of our financial position, particularly when he has just spent 5 minutes boasting how much more financial information is given in the Northern Territory than anywhere else in Australia.

As any Treasurer who knows what he is talking about would be aware, many of these things are outlined in the Auditor-General's report. Certainly, they are not in the sketchy little book we received yesterday from the Auditor-General because of the problems that the Treasurer has in getting his annual financial statements together in a form that the Auditor-General can examine.

In 1984-85, we borrowed \$75.3m and we spent \$71.7m of that in repaying loans; I think we are on the verge of a very serious situation indeed. I would like to see the figures for 1985-86 because it could well be the case that our loan repayments are greater than our new loans. Since the Northern Territory has reached a position where its loan repayments are very close to its new loans and where it has by far the highest loan repayments in Australia, I ask the Treasurer whether we have reached the limit per capita in the Northern Territory or how far off that limit is. In the light of those facts, I would have thought that that would be a question that has exercised the Treasurer's smallish mind and he would have had an answer, particularly as he has had notice of the question.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the reason why I would not make those figures available to the member for Stuart is because he is a scaremonger. His tactics are to spread rumours and innuendo. The other reason that I was not prepared to give them to him was because it is public information anyway. However, I will give him all the references and he can look it up for himself.

Mr Ede: You did not know that 2 minutes ago.

Mr COULTER: As for the Leader of the Opposition, there is one word that I have demonstrated in this Assembly this week that the members of F Troop opposite are not familiar with and that is 'development'. They have continuously set themselves up to knock everything that we have tried to do. The level of debt is related directly to development. This government is unashamedly pro-development. I cannot give the member for Millner a guaranteed assurance that that is the maximum level that will be attained because the Northern Territory will continue to develop at the rate that Northern Territorians expect.

We will service our loan borrowings within the budget. We will not go into deficit budgeting, but I cannot give the Leader of the Opposition a categorical answer to that question because our minds are not blinkered like those of members opposite. We do not have tunnel vision. The opportunities that may become available to us in the Northern Territory will be realised by a CLP government. If we have to borrow money to realise them, we will so. We will provide the jobs and opportunities for Territorians that have encouraged other Australians to migrate to the Northern Territory. We do not look for the day when all of us will be dressed in grey. We will take risks, and that is what it is about. The future does not belong to the faint-hearted. We must go out there and take calculated risks. Northern Territorians will be pleased to learn that we will continue to develop and, if that has to be done by way of loan borrowings, then so be it.

Mr LEO: We have finally got to the heart of politics in the Northern Territory: keep on writing yourself into the red and to hell with tomorrow. From what the Treasurer has said, that would seem to be the heart of politics in the Northern Territory: keep on writing out cheques, taking out loans, committing future generations to bigger and bigger debt burdens and you will stay in government. That is the sound management and Treasury advice that this Assembly is supposed to accept. Future generations will be condemned to live with that debt burden. That seems to be the secret of politics within the Northern Territory: do not care about tomorrow nor about what you are leaving for future generations after you have taken your loot and cleared off. This debate has been very revealing indeed. Not only is the Treasurer quite unashamedly doing that, but he will not tell the people of the Northern Territory when he is prepared to stop doing it.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I was not going to become involved in this debate but the ignorance displayed by members opposite is such that one cannot help but become involved. The ignorance that has been shown by the 2 frontbenchers opposite is absolutely appalling. There has been gross misuse of statistics. I challenge any of the frontbenchers opposite to point to a level of expenditure by the Northern Territory government, on a per capita basis, that is not at least 4 times greater than the average state expenditure in terms of education, roads, health or anything else. Mr Chairman, that man over there has the brains of a cabbage. He is leaving the Assembly now.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The minister will withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I withdraw it. The honourable member has not got the brains of a cabbage.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable minister will withdraw those remarks.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I withdraw my remarks unreservedly.

I challenge the members opposite to show me one area where we do not have a level of expenditure of at least 4 times the per capita average in Australia. There is one other thing. We have heard claims about the government dragging the Territory into debt. It is utterly crazy. Territorians pay less overall than anyone else in Australia. Our development is greater, we are doing far more and we have lower charges. Tell me who has lower motor vehicle registration charges or truck charges. Show me how much the average New South Welshman pays for his electricity in comparison with the Northern Territorian. Be sensible.

Speaking of electricity, there was an annual subsidy of \$40m to the Territory from the Commonwealth government. It was part of a written agreement. What happened? The Commonwealth changed its mind. It expects us, with a total population of 150 000 and only 60 000 wage earners, to be able to cover that withdrawal of funds. The opposition does not worry because its colleagues do that sort of thing.

To return to my subject, the opposition abuses statistics. Territorians know the situation. Territorians understand that they are better off under a CLP government here than they would be anywhere else in Australia. That is why they come here. They pay less and they have better housing, access to better education, better health facilities and a better government than anywhere else in the country. Our charges are lower. I believe that the scaremongering tactics of the opposition will be seen by Territorians and the media for what they are. They are childish.

I believe that we should condemn the Leader of the Opposition for his approach. I believe that everybody in the Territory is fully aware of what a balanced budget is. It is one where outgoings do not exceed income. Every year, we have made sure that our expenditure does not exceed our income and we will continue to do that, contrary to what happens in other parts of Australia and to the appalling way the federal colleagues of members opposite have performed in dragging the level of debt for every man, woman and child in this country to \$25 000 per head.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, in the fastness of the members' lounge, through the loudspeakers arranged therein, I could not help but overhear the erstwhile but honourable Minister for Transport and Works explaining how motor vehicle

charges in the Northern Territory were infinitely lower than elsewhere. I would appreciate it if he could substantiate those claims here and now.

Mr DONDAS: Oddly enough, I was interjecting. In fact, it was a comment made by the Minister for Education. But if he really would like me to take up the option ...

Mr Bell: We have committee stage next.

Mr DONDAS: Do you want me to do it in the committee stage of my bill or would you like me to answer right now?

Mr Bell: Actually, I directed the question to see whether ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for MacDonnell will cease interjecting.

Mr STEELE: A point of order, Mr Chairman! Questions have to be directed to the Treasurer. It is his turn in the barrel at the moment.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I meant to direct the question to the Attorney-General whom I perhaps inadvertently referred to as the erstwhile but honourable Minister for Transport and Works.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The member for MacDonnell will resume his seat. I have no desire to hear any further debate on the point of order.

All members are free to enter into the debate during the committee stage. It is not question time. Questions are not directed necessarily to the minister responsible for each division. In the context of the matter raised by the member for MacDonnell, the Minister for Transport and Works is well within his rights to speak.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I will pick up the point concerning the registration of trucks and motor vehicles in the Northern Territory during my contribution in the committee stage of the bill.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I would like to comment on the points raised by the member for Nhulunbuy who alleged that the Treasurer was leaving future generations with some awesome debt that they would never be able to cope with. I want to point out to members that the specific purpose payment we received from the Commonwealth up until 1975, which I referred to earlier ...

Mr Leo: You are not going into confidential PAC material now, are you?

Mr PERRON: Not at all. The figure was \$70m per annum, and that amount was provided directly to the Northern Territory solely to repay loans. Those were not loans that would hang around the necks of future generations of Territorians other than to the extent that they will be Australian taxpayers. We are all aware that a substantial portion of our total funding comes from the Commonwealth government. However, it is worth putting this matter on the record because of the outburst of the member for Nhulunbuy which implied that the Treasurer was building up debt, without any regard to its eventual size, and leaving it to be dealt with by future Territorians.

The fact is that, by and large, governments borrow as much as they can. They put those funds into assets which last for decades. Future generations of taxpayers will benefit from those assets and they should contribute by way of taxes. If the Northern Territory had chosen to borrow half what it did

over the 8 years since self-government, the debt would be half its present size, the specific purpose payments from the Commonwealth would have been halved, and the Territory would have developed only half the assets it has now. The assets include roads, schools, police stations, wharves and museums. All these things have been built since self-government and they have kept people employed. There is a very high standard of facilities right across the Territory. Mind you, these facilities have gone nowhere near meeting the total need, particularly in outback areas as members opposite would be well aware.

I think we acted very responsibly in borrowing at high levels on the basis that the Commonwealth was assisting us with capacity to repay those loans. It is still assisting us because the \$70m per annum is now included in the Northern Territory's base funding.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, this will be my last contribution to this debate. It gets to the heart of what the Leader of the Opposition was getting at in one of the questions he directed to the Treasurer. I appreciate everything that the former Treasurer said. I appreciate that specific purpose payments make up a large proportion of the debt repayments that we incur, but the Treasurer still has not told us when it will stop. These special purpose payments will not continue to grow in proportion to the amount of debt that we incur. They will not continue to increase at that very rate.

Mr Palmer: How do you know?

Mr LEO: How do I know, Mr Chairman? I know very well that, if the rest of Australia is not sick of us now, it will be soon. The rest of Australia cannot continue to carry us. That is how I know. If I were a Victorian, a New South Welshman, a South Australian or a Western Australian, and I heard politicians in the Northern Territory claiming that Territorians did not pay as much in rates and service charges and taxes as I did and were still living high on the hog, I would get heartily sick of it. That is precisely what other Australians are feeling. They are getting sick of the Territory's extravagance at their expense.

My question relates directly to the question that the Leader of the Opposition asked: when is it going to stop or at least slow down? When will there be some indication that the rest of Australia can have some faith in this government and, indeed, in this Assembly?

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I think it is time that we moved on to another of the large number of questions that I have given to the Treasurer. However, I would like first to restate the opposition's position so that there is no confusion on it.

We accept that, over the years, the Northern Territory has moved towards a state-type loans profile. We have no problem with that. But, as the member for Nhulunbuy has said, we are concerned because we have reached a stage where we have borrowed \$75m and \$71m has to go straight into repayments. We need to have a very close look at our levels of borrowings and reassess our position. That is the point that we are trying to get across and I hope that, as a result of today's discussion, the government will take that on board and at least have a look at it. It is a ridiculous situation when a government is paying more in interest than it is borrowing. That could be the logical extension of the pattern that has been revealed from 1979 up to 1984-85. Having said that, I will move on to the next question.

The budget of the Capital Resources Division of the Department of Treasury provides some grounds for concern. Amongst other things, the division has a function - and I quote from Budget Paper No 4 for the Northern Territory Treasury - 'to manage governmental contingent liability'. The financial consequences to the government's hotel guarantees are recorded under the heading 'Other Services'.

In the 1985-86 budget, \$10m was allocated to this item but the actual expenditure was \$17m. That was the difference between estimated and actual expenditure last year, and it was a difference of 74%. For 1986-87, the allocation is \$26.894m, which is a rise of 53% on last year's actual expenditure or about 60% on last year's estimated expenditure on contingent liabilities. Can the Treasurer reassure us that this year's estimate will be more accurate than last year's estimate?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I thought about this question in some depth before I decided on the answer that I am about to give. The question of contingent liabilities has been raised on many occasions, many a briefing has been provided on the subject and it has occupied time in many debates in this Assembly.

Mr Chairman, at best the budget estimates are always just that: estimates which are made at the time. The 1986-87 estimates for tourist infrastructure and support payments should prove to be accurate. In recent times, there has not been the sort of growth in this area that occurred in the years running up to 1986-87. I am not sure whether that is a good thing or a bad thing. To my mind, the ability to spend money and develop infrastructure is what the Territory is all about. I believe the policy of seeding the tourist industries that was carried out by previous Chief Ministers and supported by previous Treasurers has now proven to be correct.

At the start of this year, we had many a discussion in this Assembly about the folly of the Northern Territory government spending \$160m on the development of Yulara. As I said earlier this week in the Assembly, the member for Flynn, the Minister for Tourism and Business, Technology and Communications, is now considering whether or not to extend Yulara and introduce motel-type facilities there.

Being unashamedly pro-development, once again the Northern Territory government makes no apology for the seeding of that industry and for the contingent liabilities that we are faced with today. As I said, we believe that the support payments that I have provided under 'Other Services' are accurate because we have not had the benefit of actual operating experience. I could speak first about the Sheraton Hotel in Darwin. That is another example of a contingent liability that was continually condemned by the Labor Party, by the prophets of doom and gloom, who told us that it would cost a fortune, that we would never fill it and that we would have all sorts of problems. I think it has had an occupancy rate of 70% since it opened.

The point I am making is that the contingent liability and the money outlaid is paying off. Not only will the Northern Territory government receive its money back, it will make quite a substantial profit. I want to stress that previously we did not have experience with large hotels of that kind, and the lack of that sort of experience was a problem when the Territory was developing that industry. That applied to the Sheraton at Alice Springs also. It is now operating very satisfactorily, but we had to go out there and put money into the industry. We could not sit back with open arms and wait for the tourists to turn up and then say: 'Look, take a tent. When we get 40 000 of you here, we will build a hotel'. We had to get out and do it.

Now that we have had experience operating in the industry, our figures will be much more accurate than the estimates in previous years. I have confidence in the figures that have been provided. In 1985, the figures were based, in large part, on projections calculated on the basis of expert advice. We have all had experience of expert advice and realise how accurate it can be or how misleading. Experts have been proven wrong. They do not claim to be able to predict the future any more than we do, but they operate in the industry. We needed that industry and we had to get it up and running.

Today, the government is totally vindicated of any accusation of mismanagement that the opposition has made from time to time about the operation of those hotels. Indeed, with the success of 'Crocodile Dundee', we will probably miss out in the Northern Territory. Queensland has continued to expand and invest in tourism infrastructure whereas the Northern Territory has slipped back in the last year or so because of the scare tactics that have been used by some people. Investment is not being undertaken at the same rate as it was 2 years ago. The Labor Party has been the greatest antagonist and the greatest prophet of gloom and doom in this area. I believe the figures that I have provided are accurate. They will be much more accurate than the 1985 figures were because now we have relevant data to work from. It looks as if the Northern Territory government will consider expanding many of those facilities over the next few years.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I thank the honourable minister for his answer to that question.

Mr Coulter: It is true.

Mr SMITH: I hope you are right.

Mr Chairman, my next question relates to casino taxes and charges. Last year, the Northern Territory government spent \$512 000 directly on policing the casinos, providing gaming inspectors and doing everything else necessary to ensure that the casinos ran efficiently. The Territory received \$5000 in revenue from the casinos.

Mr Coulter: \$5288.

Mr SMITH: Not only did we forgo \$3m or \$4m directly in taxes that would have been collected if Federal Hotels had still been there, probably providing more jobs than the existing casino operators do, but we paid out \$500 000 for the privilege of making sure that things were run smoothly so that the operators could take their profit at our expense. What is worrying is that the actual result for 1985-86 was so dramatically different from the result projected for that year. It is obvious that something is wrong with the accounting system for casino taxes and charges. The NT Government Gazette S56 of 19 August indicated that the statement of receipts for April, May and June 1986 was \$69 760 and yet, for the 9 months which included those 3 months, the receipts for casino taxes and charges was \$5200. My first question is: how can that possibly be correct and what went wrong in that area? My second question is: what are the taxing arrangements for the Alice Springs casino and the Darwin casino, and how reliable is the estimate that we will get \$1m in tax out of those 2 casinos this year when last year the estimate was something like \$40 000 and we received \$5000?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I will not go into the history of the casinos but I will deal with the present. The casinos are now paying tax under the arrangements that I have entered into with the new owners of the Alice Springs



casino. Indeed, the proposed new owners of the Darwin casino have been paying tax at the rate of 8% from 1 October 1986. It is interesting to note that, in that period, they have paid around \$69 761 in tax. That would give an indication that, whilst \$1m is an estimated figure, it is not rubbery as the member for Stuart suggested the other evening.

The new operators and the new facilities available at the Darwin and Alice Springs casinos will enhance the profitability of those casinos dramatically. In fact, I believe that we will receive more than the estimated \$1m. Bearing in mind that last month was not a holiday season or peak tourist period, I am confident that the \$1m will be attained. The figures relating to costs are correct. However, regardless of the tax, we still need gaming inspectors at the casinos. The Chief Minister has announced changes in administrative arrangements and these should reduce the cost of policing the casinos.

A representative of John Aspinall is in Darwin at the moment and Mr Aspinall will be here later this month. We will be discussing the details of a \$250 000 horse race program that he is prepared to enter into. There is no greater example of confidence than a man who is prepared to invest that kind of money. It will make Darwin Australia's richest provincial race meeting, followed by Bunbury in Western Australia at \$100 000 and the cup at Southport at \$80 000. If Mr Aspinall is prepared to invest \$0.25m on a race day, that might give the Leader of the Opposition some indication of the future that he believes that the Darwin casino can offer. I have every confidence that the Alice Springs casino, under the management of the Ford family, will produce similar returns for the Northern Territory. The sale of the casinos will be finalised within the next month and I believe that augurs well for the Northern Territory in terms of revenue, regardless of the history of past tax regimes and previous operators.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I want to ask a question about stamp duty revenue. Now that the New South Wales government has taken action to close the tax avoidance device known as the Darwin shuffle and in light of government estimates that there would be an increase of 22% in the actual receipts for last financial year and that estimated for this financial year, does the Treasurer still believe that that amount is achievable?

Mr COULTER: The estimates of stamp duty revenue contained in the budget were prepared on the basis of collection from a number of stamp duty heads and included the full-year effect of revenue measures that were implemented in 1985-86. The revenue from share transactions is only one small part of the total and Treasury officials believe, therefore, that any actions taken interstate to prevent the Darwin shuffle will not be as significant as they would be if that was all we were relying on. In fact, it forms 2% of the total estimated revenue and variations through reduced activity would not alter the total revenue significantly. Interstate transfer activity is not a factor relied on to determine the stamp duty revenue estimates anyway.

Mr EDE: I have a question regarding mining royalties and the changes that have been announced. The Treasurer gave a figure of \$0.8m per percentage point. In light of the fact that there has already been a 9.5% reduction from the previous year to this year, does that reflect an estimated downturn in production or does it reflect the changes to the royalties rate?

Mr COULTER: This is a very sensitive issue. The Northern Territory has to ask a very simple question: do we want capital or do we want investment? In fact, the total impact of the amendments would probably be a loss of \$12.5m if they were all instigated on current mines and proposed mines that will

develop over the next year. We removed the royalties from Mereenie Oil to allow it to survive today's falling oil prices. For every percentage point we take off the 18%, we forgo \$800 000 in revenue potential. Even the CRD has an effect of a 2% drop from the 18%. These are all problems. However, mining is our one chance to create job opportunities, to obtain investment and to earn export dollars, especially through the mining of gold, platinum, palladium etc. We have opened 2 new goldmines in the last 2 weeks. The Northern Territory government has taken a conscious decision to attract investment dollars rather than receive capital returns on them in order to allow industry to get on with the job.

Appropriation for division 13 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 14 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 15:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I refer the Treasurer to Budget Paper No 2. The actual revenue collected from the TAB for 1985-86 was \$300 000. The estimate for 1986-87 is \$1.3m. My mathematics tell me that that is something like a 300% increase. Does the Treasurer intend to increase the government's share of TAB turnover or does he expect that our population will increase by some 300% over the next 12 months?

Mr COULTER: I am not sure if our population will increase by 300%. At present, the Northern Territory's turnover is back to the level that pertained when we had offcourse bookmakers in the Northern Territory, and it is increasing dramatically. In fact, the turnover of \$25m at the racetrack in the last few months has exceeded the total turnover expected from the TAB. \$23m is the projected figure that we are looking at for the TAB.

I am quite prepared to tell the member for Nhulunbuy about the success story of the TAB under the administration of its current executive officers. The Northern Territory government intends to introduce further innovative developments, including PubTAB which we intend to proceed with in the near future. We will be entering VIC.TAB which has a turnover of \$1200m per year. I do not know whether we can get to that amount, but it is certainly a development area. TAB has come of age. Perhaps the figures are optimistic, but there are many exciting developments which will help us to achieve them. We are looking at linking in with the Singapore and Hong Kong race circuits. We are also examining the possibility of providing TAB facilities for the Asian guests we believe will travel to the Northern Territory for the Darwin Cup this year.

Mr Leo: Your figures are lousy, admit it.

Mr COULTER: I believe that they are attainable. I am quite happy to offer the honourable member a full briefing with the Chairman of the TAB in order for him to appreciate better the sort of growth that has occurred in TAB payments over the last 3 months.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, having been involved to some extent with the introduction of the TAB in the Northern Territory, I do appreciate what it is doing and what it can do. However, to say that the \$18.5m turnover of the last financial year can be turned into a \$23m turnover this year is ludicrous. It would represent a 300% increase in revenue. My question is still valid. Does the government intend to increase its share of turnover revenue? If it does not, let it say so. I am sure many punters and the racing clubs will be

happy to hear it. However, that figure is not achievable unless the government increases its share.

Mr COULTER: At this stage, the government does not intend to increase its percentage of the turnover. However, as I have said, we cannot live in the past. We are on budget and we are looking to achieve some \$23m turnover this year. I have pointed out that turnover on the racetracks has increased dramatically both here and in Alice Springs, and the amount of money that we have put into those 2 tracks through the racecourse development fund has increased. I believe it is a growth area that has potential. I believe that \$23m is a realistic goal with the innovative arrangements that we are trying to put in place, including entry into VIC.TAB.

Mr LEO: Because the Treasurer persists with this fantasy, I am obliged to ask him how these estimates were arrived at. Compared with current TAB revenue, they are fantasy unless the proportion of government revenue is to be increased. How were these estimates arrived at?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, it amazes me how the opposition knocks the TAB continuously. Opposition members have no faith and they are forever trying to assassinate it. I have already pointed out the type of growth that we believe is possible. Let us wait and see.

Mr SMITH: I would like to ask the Treasurer a very simple question. On what basis does the Northern Territory government receive revenue from the TAB? In other words, what percentage of the TAB's total turnover comes back to the Northern Territory government and accounts for that figure of \$300 000.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I cannot give the exact percentage right now. It is a matter of sitting down and working it out which would take about 5 minutes. Do you mean the amount that goes back into Consolidated Revenue rather than into racecourse development and so on?

Mr Smith: Yes. The \$300 000.

Mr COULTER: I will get that for you in 2 seconds.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I cannot let the record show that I do not wish the TAB well. As the former Treasurer will know, on its introduction into this Assembly probably it had only 2 friends: himself and myself. I wish it well. I knew it was going to be a success story the day it was introduced, and I am sure that the former Treasurer would agree. However, it has to be fantasy to predict a 300% increase in turnover revenue in one year unless the government intends to increase its percentage of the take.

Appropriation for division 15 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 34:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, first I want to do something I rarely do.

Mr Coulter: Talk about mining?

Mr EDE: I was going to pay the minister a compliment, but that is very difficult to do. He jumped on me before I even had a chance to begin.

The fact is that, even in these difficult economic times, the budgets for the Energy and Geological Survey Divisions have been maintained at previous

levels. That is excellent. It appears that there will be an increase in activity this year in the Geological Survey Division. Those are 2 extremely important areas of the department's operations. Geological survey, in particular, is very important in providing the information that mining companies need when they look at the Territory to decide what prospective areas might exist. Having said that, I come now to the bane of my existence, and probably the minister's too: the placement of the Industrial Safety Division in the Department of Mines and Energy, and the way it has been treated. I mentioned in my second-reading speech that I would raise this matter.

In real terms, the division has suffered a 10% reduction in its allocation for salary payments. In financial terms, it has suffered something like a 20% reduction in administrative operational expenses. I would like to ask the minister whether he really believes that this division, which already has enormous difficulty coping with its workload, will be able to cope adequately with its important job in relation to the administration of the Inspection of Machinery Act, the Construction Safety Act, the Dangerous Goods Act, the Explosives Act as well as safety inspections and all its work in trying to reduce accidents and encourage safety.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I thank the member for Stuart for his compliment. With regard to industrial safety, I draw his attention to the third item listed in the activities of the division: the encouragement of self-regulation. It does not matter what sort of Gestapo techniques are employed. Inspectors could be sent off to trapeze into mining camps in the early hours of the morning to see if people had thongs on or were operating machinery to the correct standards and procedures. That sort of approach would require an army of inspectors.

When I became the Minister for Mines and Energy, I gave clear instructions to the department that the industry must be responsible. No amount of inspections will make the work place safer if the operators are not willing to take responsibility for safety. I am reminded of the television series 'On the Buses', the activities that the bus drivers get up to and the rorts they try to pull on Inspector Blakey. I believe that often happens where there are inspectors, and I am sure there would be a fair bit of agreement in this Assembly on that.

We informed miners that we were prepared to allow them to operate and we told them what the rules were. We told them of the department's expectations, that inspectors would police the relevant acts and that, if anybody was found in breach of them, there would be no excuses and the full force of the law and its penalties would be brought to bear. That is how we went about it. We set out to ensure that workers were well aware of the implications of working under dangerous conditions. In some cases, these were conditions that they had imposed on themselves in terms of protective clothing and so on. This is the philosophy behind the department's policy at the moment.

I have used every opportunity and every forum that I possibly can to tell miners that that is the way that I am operating and that no excuses will be accepted. If there are breaches of any of the acts in areas which come under the Industrial Safety Division, including mine sites and industrial situations, offenders will be prosecuted immediately. Those are the instructions that the division is now operating under. It aims to educate and to encourage self-regulation because, unless the operator and the workers have it at heart to operate safely, 1000 inspectors out in the field cannot ensure that people will be looked after. As a result of the adoption of this philosophy, funding for the division has been reduced by \$159 000.

Mr EDE: Obviously, the minister would not reduce the budget item before the new policy had had effect or had shown some successes. I realise he cannot do it now, but would he provide written information to me to show that, even in the 6 months since he has been in the job, this new policy has effected a fantastic reduction in industrial accidents and incidents. One would expect to see an early upsurge in prosecutions followed by a consequent reduction as the word gets around. Obviously, the minister will be able to provide that information. In the meantime, I would just like his confirmation that he will be able to do so.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, this is typical of the negative approach adopted by the opposition spokesman on mines and energy. He anticipates an upsurge in prosecutions. He accepts automatically that miners are shonky and will have to be prosecuted. Because we have implemented that policy, he thinks we must be out prosecuting people. He does not take into account that there is a genuine concern for work safety amongst miners, a group of people who have one of the finest safety records in Australia today. He believes that everybody must be doing things wrongly.

I will give it to him in writing, but I cannot let him get away with knocking the mining industry continuously. I have already said in this Assembly that the industry employs 200 000 people and supports another 300 000, which is 7% of Australia's work force. They operate under very stringent and strict safety conditions, more so than apply in any other industry in Australia today. There is a great degree of self-regulation in the mining industry, and I am sick and tired of people knocking the mining industry and referring to its members as irresponsible.

In terms of environmental concerns that people have about miners, they have caused less damage to the environment than have drivers of 4-wheel-drive vehicles or trail-bike riders or buffalo or any other feral animal that travels through the environment. It is not fair for the shadow spokesman on mines to assume automatically that there has been an upsurge in prosecutions as a result of the actions we have taken. We are talking about people who are responsible for 7% of Australia's work force, and I will not accept his negativism.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the honourable member has just highlighted one of the major problems that I have with his control of this particular division. Whilst this division covers the mining industry, it covers the Construction Safety Act, the Dangerous Goods Act, the Explosives Act and the Inspection of Machinery Act also. That legislation covers the factories that we have in the Territory and all the construction sites. It affects roads and freight forwarding agencies as well as mining. The construction companies are one of my major problems. If the minister checks with his department, he will find that I have written to them regarding some concerns I have about a particular site. I will not name it here, because I have not received a reply in writing as yet.

The minister indicated that he would supply, in writing, the information I requested but I will insist that the answer relate not only to the mining industry, but to the whole of his responsibilities. That demonstrates the limit of the minister's knowledge because that particular division does not cover the inspection of mines. The inspection of mines is covered on page 10. I wish to ask him about the decrease in funds available for that activity in relation to salaries and administrative and operational expenses. He has stated that the level of staffing has been reduced. I would presume that rationalisation in mine site inspections, when it is coupled with a decrease

in the amount of money available, means that there has been a decrease in that activity. Will he apply the same argument as he did to the last query or will he take a new line? I refer to division 34 on page 10

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I hate knocking the honourable member because he is the only one of F Troop to remain behind.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The Minister for Mines and Energy will desist from referring to the opposition in a derogatory fashion.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the sole representative of the Northern Territory ALP government, because he does ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! Honourable Minister for Mines and Energy, the ALP is in opposition.

Mr COULTER: The sole representative of the Northern Territory ALP opposition - and I give full credit to him because he stays here during these debates. I think we should start putting on record the number of times the member for Arafura is not in the Chamber so we can tell his constituents how much time he spends in here. However, it is to the credit of the member for Stuart that he remains in the Chamber even for adjournment debates. He is forever present; it would be a fairly dull Assembly if he were not here.

To return to the member's question, we go about our activities in the mining area very differently nowadays. We have seen mining develop into one of our greatest growth areas, and it was realised quite early that we could not service the mines in the way in which it was achieved in the past. There was extensive rationalisation of positions and the way in which the duties described in division 4 were carried out. The savings of some \$77 000 were achieved through rationalisation of the positions and staffing.

I can assure the honourable member that there has not been any downturn in the safety and occupational hygiene activities of the department itself. In other areas - the directions to small prospecting mining operations for example - there have been some moves. However, \$77 000 is not a great reduction in operational expenditure of the department, and I believe it will have very little impact on the overall operation of that particular department.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I have a fairly simple question which is more administrative than financial but I think that it comes within this context. Following the government's decision to place the new Water Authority under the management of the Board of NTEC, what impact does he think that will have, in the future, on the Water Resources Division? Is it planned that eventually it will follow the other group?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, this relates to the proposal to transfer people from the Water Division to a regime where they can operate on a more commercial basis within the NTEC system. The Water Resources Division has been moved about considerably in the past. Its officers have a good working relationship with the Department of Mines and Energy and, in some ways, it is very important that the 2 units be connected. It is not the intention of the government to transfer the Water Division immediately into a water authority or even to transfer the Water Division from the Department of Transport and Works. There has been no decision made on this move as yet, but it will be the subject of Cabinet discussion tomorrow. At this stage, there are no plans to transfer the Water Resources Division from the Department of Mines and Energy Department.

Mr EDE: I presume that the reduction in money available to the Alligators Rivers Region Unit is due to efficiencies and that there is no actual reduction in the ability of the unit to carry out its very important function.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, that is correct. The Alligator Rivers Region Unit has resulted from a grouping of functions to achieve greater efficiency. The unit that has been spread throughout the division and located strategically in a number of offices. This combination will be more efficient and will save \$61 000, which is not a great deal of money in this day and age.

Appropriation for division 34 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 35:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the government states that it expects revenue for the Darwin region to fall by 1% for 1985-86. At the same time, electricity sales are expected to grow by 5.4%. Since sales are supposed to be up and tariffs have already been increased by 2.5% and 5%, and will increase by another 2.5% in the first 4 months of the financial year, why does the government expect revenue in the Darwin region to decline?

Mr COULTER: The answer to that one is fairly simple. It is an error in the budget paper. It should read: 'Total operating revenue 1986-87 is estimated to increase by 17% over 1985-86'.

Mr EDE: Will the minister propose an amendment to rectify the mistakes that we have found in his budget?

Mr COULTER: It is simply a printing error. I do not think that the member for Stuart should run out into the streets, slapping himself on the back, because he has found a flaw in our budget. It is simply a printing error and, as such, I do not believe that it needs correction. Remember that half the money and half the revenue is almost spent. This budget has been in operation for some months now and the printing error is not a major issue. It will be corrected.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, we are talking about the Northern Territory's budget. It is not a matter of slapping together a few figures in the bar and not caring whether they are correct or not. It is a very important part of the process of government. I would like the minister to check that figure, because I do not believe it.

Mr Coulter: The error is in the bill. It is in the attached papers. Do you want to sit down now and let us get on with something? You have had 2 days in which to give us questions.

Mr EDE: You were given this question on notice.

Mr Coulter: I have given you the answer. It is in the attached papers, not in the bill. Now sit down.

Mr EDE: The minister has advised that the leverage leasing deal that he has organised with overseas interests for the Channel Island Power-station will bring innumerable benefits to Territorians. Can he give us an assurance that those benefits will be passed on to consumers in the Northern Territory? Have those benefits been passed on already? Is the 10% increase that we have suffered this year a result of those benefits or is there something in the pipeline for Territorians so that they can at least see an end to the forever escalating costs of their light and power?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, certainly there is something in the pipeline. It is called gas and it arrived here yesterday.

The sale and lease-back of NTEC generating plant will reduce the commission's borrowings by some \$7m. That is the advantage. To receive \$7m in the current year is a very exciting and wonderful opportunity. It means that we will not have to borrow more because that money is now available under the leverage lease arrangement. By the end of next year, we will have saved around about \$14m. The Commonwealth government supports the arrangements, despite the efforts of the member for Stuart in telling everybody that the government had sold the generators to the Japanese and that Territorians were in big trouble. I think that was the story that came between the one about dead cows and the other about radioactivity of the gyro-compass at Alice Springs. Of course, it was not true.

The Commonwealth government is well aware of the negotiations that we have entered into. Cost savings to electricity consumers of at least \$2.25m per annum will be achieved because it will not be necessary to borrow that money.

Mr Smith: Are you going to pass it on to the consumers?

Mr COULTER: To service such increased debt, electricity tariffs would have to rise by about 2% over and above the large tariff increases which have been forced on NTEC by the reduction of the Commonwealth operating subsidy. Apart from the \$54m debt, we inherited a power-station that was out-of-date and inefficient. We have to continue operating it until the gas station is fully on stream.

The reduction in the Commonwealth subsidy was dramatic. The first time the federal government reduced it, it said the Memorandum of Understanding was a grubby little agreement drawn up between 2 conservative governments. The Memorandum of Understanding lasted from 1978 through to 1984 without too much trouble, but the agreement that we entered into with the federal Labor government, to ensure that the subsidy remained intact, lasted just 12 short months. There is a bit of difference there, and that is what caused the high increases in electricity tariffs.

To sum up, the sale and lease-back will help NTEC balance its books and contain future tariff increases but, unfortunately, it will not allow tariffs to be reduced in absolute terms.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, that was completely outrageous. I do not have the letter here with me but I will serve it up to his boss, the Chief Minister, at some stage. The minister wrote an open letter accusing me of being the one who put the kybosh on the leverage lease-led recovery of the Australian economy. Some of the statements made by members of this government are quite amazing. I had phone calls from members of various governments around Australia. They were laughing their heads off and asking what sort of mob of nongs we were up here and whether that letter was written by the tea boy, because they could not believe that a minister of the Crown had acted in such a ridiculous fashion.

The question was basic. The previous minister said that we would have to wear 2.5% increases each quarter for quite a period to come. Will the leverage lease provide a period during which no 2.5% increase will be imposed?

Mr COULTER: In real terms, there will be no reduction. We were lucky that the federal Labor government did not remove the whole of the subsidy in



its last budget. That would have cost us even more. We may be able to reach an agreement - and we are talking about that with the federal government at the moment - that we can slide out of the subsidy as we slide out of Stokes Hill. We will still be left to service a debt of \$54m. I do not know what a second-hand power-station would fetch, but I can assure honourable members that it would be nowhere near that amount. We are entering into negotiations with the federal government to ease out of the operating subsidy. We could have lost the whole of the operating subsidy last time. By entering into this agreement, we have been saved the necessity of borrowing an additional \$7m this year and another \$14m next year.

I will just refer to the fact that the member for Stuart could have jeopardised the negotiations. On 15 August, when we entered into the leverage lease arrangements, there were people from other governments in Australia on the same aircraft, travelling to the same destination to sign the same leverage lease arrangements with the same companies. The member used scare tactics once again by means of innuendo. He did not understand what it was about even though he was offered full briefings. The member for Millner was offered that opportunity also. The member for Stuart suggested that we were up to something shonky.

Governments throughout Australia were entering into very similar arrangements. I was concerned about the commercial sensitivity of that arrangement at that time. The member for Stuart should realise the effects of his scare tactics and his prophecies of doom and gloom. People were becoming very sensitive to the rumours and innuendo that he was circulating about what the Northern Territory had done in relation to the powerhouse. It was of considerable concern and embarrassment to the people who were entering into the negotiations. His actions caused a great deal of uncertainty.

Mr EDE: I ask the honourable minister to refer to Hansard. The only reference that I made was during a debate in this Assembly when I said I wished to discuss the sale of the powerhouse. If he can find one press release or other statement made by me apart from that, I will be perfectly happy. It is quite obvious that his own department leaks like a sieve. He has jumped on that particular reference of mine to blame me for the loose security within his own department.

Appropriation for division 35 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 36 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 59:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the minister will recall that, in my comments in the second-reading debate, I queried considerable increases in various charges. The first increase I want to mention relates to motor vehicle charges. The Attorney-General and erstwhile Minister for Transport and Works made the rash claim that the Territory's motor vehicle charges were the lowest in the country. I was quite sure at the time that he made that rash claim off the top of his head and I am fairly confident he is unable to establish that. I will return to that issue in a moment.

The more substantive issue with respect to motor vehicle charges relates to the increase from actual collections of \$5.22m in 1985-86 and the estimate for 1986-87 of \$9.01m. That is an increase of 72%. I trust that the minister can provide some adequate explanation for that. For the 1986-87 financial year, those increases only came into effect on 1 September which means that we

will see somewhat less than a full year's effect. Given that the increase on a fairly popular vehicle, such as the average 4-cylinder family sedan, was a mere 4% and, bearing in mind also that new motor vehicle registrations dropped from 612 in August 1985 to 511 for the corresponding month this year, I suggest that the increase that the government has estimated deserves some explanation.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I thank the member for giving some forewarning of his questions. The Transport and Works portfolio is by far the largest portfolio the Northern Territory government has. Last year, the former Minister for Transport and Works spent some 3 hours answering questions during the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill.

During the course of this afternoon, some remark may have been made by the former Minister for Transport and Works that motor vehicle registration charges in the Northern Territory are among the cheapest in Australia.

Mr Bell: I think you will find he said 'the cheapest'.

Mr DONDAS: He is quite right.

The government will not be imposing huge increases in motor vehicle registration fees later this year, as was suggested by the honourable member. Indeed, I can assure members that no additional motor vehicle registration charges will be imposed during this financial year.

It is important to recognise that a substantial component of the increase in registration fees was due to the imposition in 1986 of a \$10 inspection fee per vehicle and an additional \$5 surcharge per registration transaction for the first time. Page 77 of the Department of Transport and Works Annual Report will give the member an indication why we have decided to impose a surcharge for registration transactions. In 1985-86, 155 208 transactions occurred. They involved new vehicles, previously registered vehicles, renewals, dealers, transfers, temporary licences, customer refunds, registration and miscellaneous statistics. There were about 18 000 transactions within the registration statistics.

It is the Northern Territory government's policy to try to obtain revenue from the community for services. That is one of the reasons why the surcharge has been imposed. It becomes a revenue component of registration charges. It is intended to cover the operational cost of processing vehicle registrations. At the same time, important checks are carried out to minimise the trade in stolen vehicles, amongst other things.

A registration surcharge with administration fees is charged in one form or another by all states and territories with the exception of Queensland. This fee varies from a high of \$25, on a new registration in the ACT, to \$14.50 on either 6 or 12 months registration in WA, \$22 on a registration transaction in NSW and \$3 on private vehicle registration in Victoria. Overall, Northern Territory registration charges compare favourably with those imposed elsewhere in Australia.

On the question of the decline in new vehicle registrations, it is important to recognise that, while this has certainly been the case, particularly since the introduction of the fringe benefits tax, it is nevertheless a fact that people are continuing to buy and utilise motor vehicles. However, they are holding on to their existing vehicles longer or purchasing second-hand vehicles. Thus, while new car registrations have

dropped, vehicle fleets continue to expand and registrations between September 1985 and September 1986 increased by 4.85%. Over the same period, stamp duty from this source increased by 4.96%, confirming the continued demand for motor vehicles, although they are not new.

Projected revenue was estimated at \$2.49m by the end of October 1986. Actual revenue was \$2.46m, indicating that government revenue from the Motor Vehicle Registry is on target to meet the full-year projected figures. Clearly, this target is being met with the current fee, determined on 1 September, indicating that there will be no additional increase in fees to meet projected revenue over the full year.

I will pick up the point in regard to current fees for the Northern Territory. For a private sedan of 1.2 litres, the total fee, including registration and compensation, in the Northern Territory was \$195.60. The proposed new fee will be \$207.80. Registration and compensation for that same vehicle is \$328 in the ACT, \$310 in New South Wales, \$220.15 in Victoria, \$266.10 in Queensland and \$209 in South Australia. The 2 states where it is cheaper than in the Northern Territory are Western Australia at \$175.79 and Tasmania at \$189. However, I understand that those states will be increasing their motor vehicle charges in the near future.

In the private sedan market of 4.1 litres, registration and compensation in the Territory is \$261.50. Mr Chairman, I could go on and really take up the time of the committee ...

Mr Bell: You are not addressing the question.

Mr DONDAS: I am addressing the question because the honourable member said that he did not think that Northern Territory registration fees and compensation were cheap. He said it was more expensive here than anywhere else. In fact, when the Attorney-General made a point about that during the course of the afternoon, the member ran in from the bar to take the Attorney-General to task.

The proposed fee for registration and compensation on a medium-sized truck of 6.8 litres is \$385. Previously, the fee was \$321. That is an increase of \$64 and represents a very high percentage increase. But, it compares with charges of \$1138 in the ACT, \$1127 in New South Wales, \$986.75 in Victoria, \$1186 in Queensland, \$1106 in South Australia, \$1063.29 in Western Australia and \$605 in Tasmania. That is for a small Bedford truck that races around the countryside.

Let us get into the heavy trucks of 14 litres. A combination of registration and compensation in Northern Territory at \$429 compares to the highest of \$17083 in New South Wales, with the other lowest being Tasmania at \$802.

Mr Chairman, the point that I am trying to make is that, whilst our registration fees have increased this year, our fees are still lower than those imposed in the states. The member for MacDonnell has said, quite rightly, that there have been massive hikes in some cases in percentage terms. However, when one sees what the consumer has to pay for his registration and third party insurance in the states, on average we are still the cheapest.

Mr BELL: I thank the honourable minister for his contribution. I would appreciate a copy of the document he was reading from. Clearly, the resources available to a minister for the Crown far exceed those available to a humble backbencher such as myself.

Mr D.W. Collins: And rightly so.

Mr Perron: Say sorry, Denis.

Mr BELL: Humility is its own reward.

Mr Perron: I am not trying to humiliate you at all.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr BELL: I would truly appreciate a copy of those figures as they relate to motor vehicle charges in the Territory.

It was my intention to discover whether the rabid outpourings of the Attorney-General could be substantiated by figures, even rubbery ones. We have established that they could not. However, with the briefing note available to the well-informed minister, it is clear that that may be able to be substantiated. I would appreciate access to that sort of information.

However, I turn to the second and more important point. We have not established where the increase is to come from. The minister referred to the fee for a 1.2 litre sedan which is to increase from \$195.60 to \$207.80, an increase of between 4% and 5%. Effectively, the honourable minister concurred with me in that regard. The other point he made was that there will be an inspection fee or registration surcharge as occurs in the states. He said that, in the ACT, it was \$25 and in New South Wales \$22 and so on, demonstrating that the inspection fee in the Territory was relatively low. He directed me to page 77 of the department's annual report and pointed out that the registration statistics indicate 155 000-odd registrations.

Mr Dondas: Not registrations, transactions.

Mr BELL: Let us be generous and say that each of those transactions will incur the inspection fee - perhaps that is an unreasonable assumption?

Mr Dondas: You have to read what they are. Some of them involve windscreen labels or temporary licences and so on.

Mr BELL: All right. Presumably, the bulk of those transactions were renewals on previously registered vehicles. Let us be generous and say they represent 155 000. At \$10 a time, at the most that would net \$1.5m, and the increase is 70%. That will not come anywhere near to covering the increase of \$3.79m between actual collections in 1985-86 and estimated collections in 1986-87. Okay?

I refer the honourable minister to Budget Paper No 2, page 2. The figures are all there: \$5 221 155 in actual expenditure in 1985-86 and \$9.14m in 1986-87. It just does not add up and I want to know where the figure of \$3.97m comes from. It cannot come from a simple 4% increase in registration charges and not even half of it would result from the \$10 inspection fee, which is the proposition that the honourable minister advanced.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, increased motor vehicle fees and charges came into effect on 1 September 1986. Registration charges were last increased in 1981, licence fees were last increased in 1983 and driver's licence charges were last increased on 1 July 1978. We used movements in the CPI to develop the levels. I would be quite happy to provide the member for MacDonnell with 3 pages of calculations done on the various types of transactions. I will

pick an example at random: the registration or renewal of registration of all motor vehicles or trailers. For a motor vehicle with an engine capacity up to and including 3 litres, except engines with more than 4-cylinders or rotary engines, \$18 was the previous fee and the new fee is \$24 with a minimum charge of \$9.70 or a maximum charge of \$49. The Department of Transport and Works has good statistics that would be pretty accurate within 10% either way. It is estimated that there will be 36 596 transactions in that particular category and these will give a total additional revenue of \$278 130. The last increase occurred on 24 August 1981. The CPI increase is 34.4% and the estimate is based on the average of minimum maximum charges within the range.

Take another random sample: trailers, except caravans over 0.5 t. The previous fee was 40¢ per 25 kg. The new fee for that trailer will be 55¢ per 25 kg. It is estimated that there will be 2844 transactions in that particular category alone, which will give additional revenue of another \$55 700.

I would implore the member for MacDonnell to look at these figures at some later stage because the estimates of revenue have been based on previous transactions. There have been increases but, even with those, most of our motor vehicle registration fees are roughly 90% cheaper than those in the states.

Mr BELL: I would like to postpone the vote on this appropriation until I have had a chance to look at those. Am I able to do that, Mr Chairman? The minister made vague references to the CPI and to projections prepared by his department from 1981 onwards. I have tried to put the question as clearly as I possibly can. Neither the CPI increases nor increased inspection charges can possibly explain the 70% increase, and we are here to find out why.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Honourable member, you may move to have further consideration of the appropriations for this division postponed and seek the support of the Assembly.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, before we move any further, I think that the honourable member for MacDonnell is being unreasonable in relation to the basic estimates. Probably it has taken officers of the department 5 months to compile them. I am happy to provide him with all the documentary information that I have and with a full briefing from the department. I am not saying that we will collect every penny that has been estimated but we do anticipate collecting an acceptable level of revenue. Pages of computations are involved in those estimates.

Mr BELL: I do not wish to prolong the committee stage unnecessarily but we did flag this question 2 days ago. Quite honestly, I am tempted to move for the postponement of this division but, because the minister has proven to be a trustworthy character in the past, I am prepared to take it on face value that possibly an adequate explanation can be provided during a briefing. It is a matter of some concern to me that this sort of information cannot be provided in the relatively informal setting of the committee stage of this bill.

My second question relates to water charges. In Budget Paper No 2, I notice that the actual revenue collected for water charges was \$6.321m and that that is projected to increase to \$9.5m for the 1986-87 financial year. The water charge increases that came into effect at the beginning of the financial year represented a 23% rise for the average household using about 750 kL. Since individual water charges are expected to increase by 23%, some explanation is needed as to how revenue will increase by a huge 50%.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, whilst there have been some dramatic increases in water and sewerage charges, the Northern Territory still comes out rather handsomely in comparison to the states.

Mr Bell: That is not the point.

Mr DONDAS: We are saying that there have been massive hikes but we are not the most expensive in Australia.

The domestic water charge in Cairns is \$148.32 for an average 750 kL and the sewerage charge for 2 pedestals is \$219.12; in Townsville, the charges are \$162.50 and \$223.44; in Sydney, \$252.80 and \$156.00; in Melbourne, \$280.80 and \$221.44; in Adelaide, \$393.40 and \$133.70; in Perth, \$294.78 and \$427.08; and in Hobart, \$294.60 and \$235.68. In 1985-86, in the Northern Territory the charges were \$140.50 and \$150 and, for 1986-87, they are \$187.50 and \$200.

I think it is important to put that in context because, over the years, we have really been lagging in terms of utility charges. Consideration must also be given to the financial climate in which we are framing the budget and the effects of the Memorandum of Understanding. No government likes to raise charges, but we have to be responsible.

As far as water revenue is concerned, under the previous system water consumed in addition to the basic allowance was not billed for until the following financial year. That is the biggest component of additional revenue this financial year because quarterly billing will start. The Water Division will be charging and collecting revenue for water consumed during the current financial year. For the 750 kL consumption, residents should be paying an extra \$35 per household. I think the member inferred yesterday that the increase was about \$20 per person. That is where most of the additional revenue will come from. We have the capacity to collect our water bills quarterly.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I want to raise a totally unrelated question that I know is vexing a number of people. Has the minister fixed the problem in respect of flats that have 2 toilets.

Mr Dondas: No.

Mr SMITH: Can I just finish? I am not suggesting that there is an easy solution to this matter because, out of some self interest, I have spent some time thinking it through. The anomaly exists because flats are presently charged as one block of land. \$200 is paid for the first 2 pedestals and an extra \$150 for each one after that. Residents of single-pedestal flats pay less than the normal householder who lives in a house on a separate block, but residents of double-pedestal flats pay more than those living in houses on individual blocks. That is causing a little bit of heat in the community.

On behalf of people concerned about this, I seek an assurance that the government is aware of the anomaly and, with the aid of its boffins, is seeking some equitable solution. There is no doubt that the present situation is inequitable and that, whilst some people are paying around \$280 for 2 pedestals others - like myself - who live in a house with 2 pedestals are paying only \$200. I would appreciate the minister's comments.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, we are aware of the anomalies. When we introduced the new sewerage charges, these questions were highlighted by people at Tracy Lodge and a few of the sporting organisations which will be

affected. I will be making some recommendations to my Cabinet colleagues that the minister will be able to waive some charges for groups such as the Salvation Army, the Old Timer's Home in Alice Springs and, of course, Tracy Lodge. I hope to be able to address that matter further during the course of these sittings.

A unit with 2 pedestals will be charged \$283 whereas an ordinary house with 2 pedestals will pay only \$200. There is an anomaly and my boffins are working on it. I believe that they are almost ready to provide me with the information that I need to resolve this problem.

Mr BELL: I appreciate the interpolation of the 2-pedestal problem but, to return to the issue of the increases, I take the minister's point that quarterly billing will account for the 50% increase: money will be collected during 1986-87 that would not have been collected until 1987-88 if the previous regimen of billing had been retained. I accept the point about the increased frequency of collection being responsible for the 50% increase in charges for water. I will be generous and assume that the same explanation applies to sewerage charges although, as we have noted, they will be increased by about 30% from \$150 to \$200, whereas the estimated revenue will be some 50% more than that. However, I accept the explanation that the increase will result from more frequent collection. Even so, I would like the minister to assure me that he has some sort of breakdown of that particular figure.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I do not have the same sort of conclusive documentation for water and sewerage tariffs that I had for motor vehicles and associated charges, but I would pick up another point. The 1986-87 revenue from water will include the basic charge for this year and the excess water charges from last year. I will use another example. The member may remember that, in the 1984-85 financial year, revenue collections for the Liquor Commission totalled some \$7.5m. If he looks at the revenue collections of the Liquor Commission, he will see that they total only about \$4.5m to \$5m. This is because there was a change in the licence fee structure to allow liquor licence holders to lodge their returns at an earlier date. In the same way, revenue from water and sewerage charges will be up in 1986-87, but it should be less in 1987-88. I would be happy for the department to brief the member if he so wishes.

Mr BELL: I am quite happy to place on record my appreciation of the minister's provision of information with respect to the water supply and sewerage appropriation. There are some obvious difficulties with the timing of the charges and the legislative arrangement, but it is scarcely apposite to comment on them in the context of the Appropriation Bill.

Finally, I want to ask about a matter that affects my electorate. I refer the minister to page 79 of the department's 1984-85 annual report. During the 1984-85 financial year, the upgrading of the Impadna-Idracowra road was deferred. I notice that the item was not reinstated in the 1985-86 annual report.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, the project was deferred in 1985 because of financial constraints imposed by the federal government, resulting in revision of the Northern Territory's expenditure and a subsequent mini-budget. The item was not reinstated in 1985-86 because other items were given greater priority by the Roads Division. The current status is that the upgrading is still listed as a forward works proposal. While it is listed as such, normal maintenance will be carried out on a regular basis.

Mr BELL: I am afraid that bipartisanship is being stretched to the limit here. My constituents deserve some explanation of why this road was on the list in 1984-85 and subsequently deleted.

Let me state the question in as unemotional a fashion as I possibly can: why was the Impadna-Idracowra-Horseshoe Bend Road not a priority in 1985-86, when it had been in 1984-85?

Mr DONDAS: The easiest answer is that the federal government reduced our level of funding for roads by nearly \$11m.

Mr BELL: That will not do. Mr Chairman, the minister has given me a very good justification, which I am quite prepared to accept, for deferring the upgrading of that road. He has given no reason for moving it down the list of priorities. I ask the minister to give some decent answer as to why that work has slipped down the list of priorities.

Mr DONDAS: I really sympathise with the member for MacDonnell but the simple fact is that that funding was taken away from the Northern Territory roads program this year. As this particular road had program status in 1984-85, I will give the member an undertaking that I will take a keen interest in it. I went to a great deal of trouble to find out what it was because Hansard did not come out till the middle of the day. I will undertake to have discussions with my department about the Impadna-Idracowra-Horseshoe Bend Road and I will try to provide the honourable member with information as to when he can expect a firm commitment on the road. That is the best I can do.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, there is an airstrip at Yuendumu which is generally accepted to be the second best in the southern region after Alice Springs. The government decided to spend something between \$350 000 and \$1m on sealing it. The project was not included in last year's budget, nor was it in this year's budget, but it happened. If the community had been given an option, most certainly it would have decided that it preferred to have improvements made to its water supply. If the community had been asked whether it wanted an airstrip or some water at west camp, where hundreds of people have existed for years and years with only 3 standpipes, living in the utmost poverty without even the tin garden sheds they call houses these days, there is no doubt whatsoever that it would have chosen water. I have followed up the suggestion that the community was asked about this. The closest I could get was that one person was approached in the following terms: 'We are thinking of sealing the airstrip. Will that be all right?' Of course, if somebody asks the community whether it wants the airstrip sealed or not, the community will answer that it wants it sealed. The point is that I could not find the appropriation in last year's budget, but the sealing occurred.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, the member for Stuart knows about the arrangements for that type of work in communities. Discussion takes place with the community elders and councils in the area. Those discussions continue for 4 or 5 months while priorities are determined.

Mr Ede: Why wasn't it in the budget?

Mr DONDAS: The member is talking about water now, which is a new subject. He should direct his query to the Minister for Community Development. The information that I have is that that airstrip was sealed because the Royal Flying Doctor Service requested it. We all know the important work that RFDS does.



Mr Ede: Why wasn't it included in the budget?

Mr DONDAS: As it has already been done, it would not appear in this budget. This budget is for the 1986-87 financial year. It must have appeared in the 1985-86 budget somewhere as minor new works.

Mr Ede: An amount of \$1m?

Mr DONDAS: You said it was between \$350 000 and \$1m. It would have gone to tender if it was \$1m. I will find out a bit more about it and let you know.

Mr Ede: Thank you.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I am not sure whether this is in the minister's area, but we are somewhat confused.

In a statement made within the last few weeks, the member for Berrimah said that a sum of \$800 000 will be allocated towards the construction of a swimming complex in Palmerston. We cannot find that allocation of \$800 000 in the Budget Papers. My first question is: which department's vote is the money coming from, Transport and Works, Community Development or the Treasurer's vote? My second question is: who is the \$800 000 going to?

Mr DONDAS: The proposal to construct a swimming pool at Palmerston has been around for quite some time. It is related to other developments that are taking place in the Palmerston area. As I understand it, the developer sought some land from the Northern Territory government to build other infrastructure at Palmerston. I do not know whether I should really be using the name of a national organisation that wanted to go into Palmerston. It asked the Northern Territory government for some land. The government wants the developer to build the swimming pool on its behalf. Eventually, the pool would be transferred to the council. Discussions have been taking place for quite some time, but no formal agreement has been reached between the developer and the government regarding the other land components. We have a commitment to provide a swimming pool at Palmerston, but it cannot go ahead until the land component is settled. The developer's proposal poses some problems relating to traffic flow. In addition, the end user is a national concern that we would really like to have in that region and it has its priorities too. I would be quite happy to arrange a briefing between the Leader of the Opposition and myself in regard to that proposal. At this stage, the swimming pool is to be provided by the developer, with a reimbursement by the Northern Territory government at some future stage. That is why it does not appear in the papers.

Mr SMITH: I am more confused than ever. You can tell election time is coming up.

A number of weeks ago, as a result of some publicity given by the endorsed Labor candidate for that area on the lack of a swimming pool, a press conference was called at which the developer stated quite clearly that a \$17m complex would be built at Palmerston and that the swimming pool would be an integral part of it. What the minister is now saying is that that TV interview was a load of nonsense, and that no firm and detailed plans have been approved by the government for that complex and the swimming pool. That is what he is saying to me. The people of Palmerston will be very pleased. The building of their pool has been postponed even further.

Mr Dondas: If it were not for the wet season, it would have been started.

Mr SMITH: What nonsense! You have just said that you have not been able to reach agreement on what land is to be used and, in the next breath, you say that work would have started were it not for the wet season. Those 2 statements do not stack up. I put it to you that the people of Palmerston have been sold short again. You still have not answered my question. Who is going to get the \$800 000 and when?

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, what I said was that the developer and the government are still trying to resolve what portion of land can be used by a national organisation which would like to come into the Northern Territory. The land for the swimming pool has been set aside, as has the car park. The developer's initial proposal for the pool and car park was not acceptable to the government and therefore it is being redesigned. The issue has been further complicated because the land that was set aside for the total proposal is not a site that the end user wants to have. He wants to move about 100 m, but that requires relocation of the car park, changes to traffic flow and so on. That is what is taking the time. No doubt, once the swimming pool design is complete, the Northern Territory government will provide further financial assistance because the swimming pool will cost more than \$800 000. After a period of time, the pool will be transferred to the Palmerston Town Council.

The Leader of the Opposition asked why the project does not appear in this budget. It is because of the negotiations that have been taking place between the developer, the user and the government. Once we know what is going to happen, the Department of Lands will make a request for funding through the Treasurer's Advance to enable it to happen this financial year.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, if what the minister is saying is true, the Treasurer's budget speech was very irresponsible. The budget speech said quite clearly that, among a number of initiatives, including the police training facilities, central fire station and so on, \$800 000 will be allocated towards construction of the Palmerston Recreation Complex, including a public swimming pool.

Mr Dondas: It is there.

Mr SMITH: Of course it is there, but it is not in the budget papers because the government has no intention of spending the money this financial year. I am saying that the Treasurer was irresponsible in his budget speech and indulged in blatant vote-catching. There is a considerable contradiction between what the minister is saying and what the Treasurer has said. Perhaps the minister would like to go outside and talk to him so that they can get their stories straight. It is not good enough for the Treasurer to say there is \$800 000 in this year's budget for the Palmerston swimming pool and for the minister to say that it is not there because there is no intention of spending the money this year.

Mr Dondas: I did not say that at all.

Mr SMITH: You did say that.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr DONDAS: I said that, if the money was required, no doubt it would come out of the Treasurer's Advance.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the Treasurer included the Palmerston swimming pool in a list in his budget speech. He said: 'I will now outline some of the initiatives contained in the budget'. He then read out the list, item by item. At the end came the new Katherine power-station and an allocation of \$800 000 towards the construction of the Palmerston Recreation Complex, including a public swimming pool. The Treasurer spoke of it as a budget project. It is not good enough to say that it will be funded from the Treasurer's Advance. If the Treasurer's Advance is simply an allocation to get him re-elected, that is not good enough either.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, the Treasurer's Advance is used for all kinds of things. The point I was trying to make for the Leader of the Opposition was that, because of the complicated negotiations that have been taking place for a land allocation in Palmerston, the design and the government's reappraisal of that design, and the oncoming wet season, it would be ridiculous to ask the developer to dig a hole just to satisfy the Leader of the Opposition that a swimming pool was to be built.

Mr Smith: That is not the point.

Mr DONDAS: The point is that we need to do it the right way. If everything had been equal, the young kids of Palmerston would have been swimming in it in February or March next year.

Mr Ede: You had no money.

Mr DONDAS: The developer was going to put up the money in the initial stages, and we were talking about some other funding. But the point is that we needed to resolve the wider issue of the development of Palmerston. Planning for the development of Palmerston was more important than the swimming pool. As I say, a national organisation is involved but I am not happy, at this stage, to use its name in this Assembly because the deal has not been concluded. I would be happy to tell the Leader of the Opposition who it is if the deal were concluded. That organisation came to us recently and said it would prefer to locate the development about 150 m further down. That has posed all kinds of problems as far as traffic management, parking and the mall are concerned. That is why there has been a delay. I understand that representatives of this national group are coming to Darwin some time next week and, hopefully, the matter will be resolved.

However, the developer has a clear requirement to construct that swimming pool. The kids and the people of Palmerston will not be cheated. We will get that swimming pool there as soon as possible. Don't you think that the member for that area asks me, almost on a monthly basis, where that pool is? I keep explaining that there are more important issues to be resolved and ask the member to be patient. We anticipate that the pool will be put in as soon as the dry season commences.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the honourable minister is missing the point which is that, in his budget speech, the Treasurer outlined a number of areas where money would be committed. All those allocations are clearly shown in the budget papers - except one. The allocation of \$5.6m for the Trade Development Zone is clearly shown in the Trade Development Zone budget. \$3.4m for the police training facilities at Berrimah is shown in the appropriate budget. Other appropriations in the Budget Papers include \$4.1m for a new central fire station, \$13.5m to Katherine East High School, \$36m for new road projects and \$5m for the completion of a safe anchorage in Frances Bay. But, no allocation of \$800 000 is shown for the Palmerston swimming pool. Why doesn't it appear

anywhere? It should be there. It is not good enough to say that it will come from the Treasurer's Advance because that takes the definition of the Treasurer's Advance to a dizzy, new limit. The minister is saying that the money has been committed in the budget papers, and make a big play about it, so that the local member - who happens to be the Treasurer - will get some publicity. No money will be committed but, if the government manages to get the pool completed in this financial year, it will draw it out of the Treasurer's Advance. The money should be allocated in the budget somewhere, and I invite the minister to respond.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I would remind the Leader of the Opposition that there will be a reassessment of the budget in February or March. It happens every year. Departments put in bids for a particular financial year but are unable to expend their funds sometimes and that is one reason why another budget process occurs in February or March. It is more than likely that negotiations will be concluded with the developers and end users by then and, no doubt, funds will be committed at that time.

The Leader of the Opposition asked why the item did not appear in the Budget Papers. The reason why no formal allocation appears in the Budget Papers is that negotiations and discussions are still being carried out ...

Mr EDE: Why was it mentioned in the budget speech then?

Mr DONDAS: You will have to ask the Treasurer that.

Appropriation for division 59 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 77:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I refer you to Budget Paper No 4, page 5, and the figure standing against salaries and payments in the nature of salaries. I know the amount of money is not particularly huge in terms of the millions of dollars the government deals in, but I see standing against salaries and payments in nature of salaries an increase of some \$75 000. By my calculation, that is an increase of some 25%. The explanation given at the bottom of the page is: 'Provision made for full year effect of increases granted in 1985-86'. It does not say whether or not there is to be an increase in personnel, whether they have all just voted themselves a pay rise or anything that explains what that 25% represents. Perhaps the minister can enlighten me.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, that is in the Marine Division. I will just have a look at the figures that I have. There is no additional salary component in that, if my memory serves me right. There is the same number of staff. Can I undertake to provide that information to the honourable member, Mr Chairman?

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I will repeat the query. By my calculations, it is a substantial increase of some 20%. As I say, the amount of money is not huge; we are talking about \$75 000. However, in relation to last year's budget figure of some \$300 000, 10% of which would represent \$30 000, we are looking at in excess of 20% increase in that budget allocation. I just wonder whether the department is putting on more people or is giving a pay rise to its personnel.

Mr DONDAS: It is not more people, but I will find out the reason and let the honourable member know.

Appropriation for division 77 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 78:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I have a number of questions under this division. I would ask the minister to go to page 11 of Budget Paper No 4. It shows a cash balance of \$780 000 carried forward and the allocation this year is for \$1.067m. Given that that cash balance was carried forward, why was it deemed necessary to increase the allocation for 1986-87 over and above the amount that was carried forward from last year? I assume the figure of \$780 000 represents actual expenditure?

Mr DONDAS: That is revenue. They raised \$780 000 this year and expect to raise more revenue. It is not an expense.

Mr LEO: Fine, I understand. I did not appreciate that that was revenue.

I have a further question, Mr Chairman. Further down, under operational expenditure for the administration division, actual expenditure last year was \$3.9m and the allocation this year is \$5m-plus. That is an increase of \$1.1m or some 300%. I see at the back under the explanation of variations: '4. Operational Expenditure - Administrative Division expenses are to increase to cope with interest and other charges on the Frances Bay Mooring Basin'.

Mr Chairman, could the minister explain what the breakdown of that is. 'Interest' is one component of it and 'other charges' another component. There is no indication as to the nature of interest we are paying on that development nor what those other charges may be. I assume they will be ongoing.

Mr DONDAS: It is a very difficult breakdown to give, Mr Chairman, as I am sure the honourable member would appreciate. Bank interest would normally be at the Commonwealth Bank rate, whatever that might be on the day. The Port Authority cannot exceed that limit.

What it really relates to is semi-government borrowings - additional funds that we need for the safe harbour. There may be some administrative charges in there. No doubt some infrastructure might have to go in there. The breakdown will be very difficult to work out on the spot. I will provide the honourable member with that information.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like to spend a few minutes on the subject of the Frances Bay mooring facility. I do not want to be accused of being negative or whatever. I simply want to state a few principles I think ought to be applied to that particular facility. Hopefully, it will provide some fairly substantial spin-offs to the community, but a couple of principles must be applied.

Firstly, I do not like the way it is handled in the budget in that it is grouped with the total cash flow documents associated with the Darwin Port Authority. I would like to see it extracted and treated on its own, with an income and expenditure statement, so that we can see the capital that has been invested in it - the actual cost of the total facility - and trace the interest on that capital through the expenses. Then, we need to have a budget which shows, for a start, what occupancy levels will break even, the occupancy levels that we are achieving at a given time and what the projected levels are to determine to what extent this particular facility will break even on costs,

repay some of the capital invested or make money on top of a capital repayment component. I am not saying that this project necessarily has to make a profit, if we take into account the capital component, because there are some substantial flow-ons to the rest of the economy from having that facility there. Basically, it is a matter of deciding on the level of discounting of the investment capital as against the use of that capital in another facility, and the flow-on benefits from the Frances Bay facility as against those from another facility which may have a different rate of return on investment capital.

We do not know those answers and we cannot make those judgments. It is very important that we get the sums right now so that we can track the occupation levels and the costs. It should have been done before the project was started. I would like the accounting to be put in place so that we can do it from now on.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I interjected that the member must have been talking to some of the Treasury officials because that is exactly what they have been saying. In fact, discussions have taken place between senior officers of Treasury with the Port Authority to obtain that perspective. This budget was framed in July and set in August. We have been waiting for final construction costs and there are some variations there. Some will be arbitrated in court because we do not agree with some of the additional costs. I take the point that the member is making. It is our intention to fast-track it. Eventually, a private enterprise component will be introduced and we must be very careful that that component is not given too many advantages because it is the taxpayers who have put up the \$6m. It will be a very important facility. The news was not good yesterday with regard to the extent of closure of the seas to our fishing people but, from a resource point of view, it is probably a very good idea.

Appropriation for division 78 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 65:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I have a further question that is akin to previous questions I asked about the amount of revenue to be raised by the Department of Lands. I remind the minister that, in the second-reading debate, I commented that the revenue from land sales, leases and rents is projected to increase from \$21.38m to \$27.63m. This represents a 29% increase which far exceeds the CPI or any other sort of measure of expected increase. I would appreciate an explanation from the minister.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I do not know whether being forewarned of this question will help me because my Cabinet colleagues have given me the task of raising something like \$27m this year. It is always very difficult to predict the revenue to be derived from land sales because of the factors that affect it such as the economy, interest rates, land being available for certain types of development etc. In 1985-86, the unprogrammed direct sales income totalled \$5.5m compared to an estimate of \$52 000.

The department has given me a land bank and a proposal whereby we may be able to raise \$27m in land sales throughout the Northern Territory. Land has been identified for various uses and is to be sold by auction or over-the-counter sales. Some known development proposals are included, such as the development on the Esplanade which, presumably, will proceed this year, and we will be paid for that land this year.

Although I was able to give confident estimates on transport charges because of the experience that the Department of Transport and Works has had over the years, I really would not give that assurance as far as this \$27m is concerned. But let me put it this way: if I do not raise \$27m, I do not think I will be Minister for Lands next time around.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I must ask the honourable minister a question about a specific piece of land because there have been a number of rumours. I refer to the future of the old produce market site. Everybody is aware that the Corrugated Iron Theatre Group was given its marching orders a few weeks ago and there has been some speculation since then about the government's intentions for that block. I am not particularly interested in the name of any particular person who may be involved in relation to it. Quite clearly, that block does not fall within the direct sales guidelines. I would seek an assurance from the minister that, if the government intends to make it available for private purchase, it will be done in an open manner which will enable either auction or tender.

Mr DONDAS: I think that we are too far up the road for me to give that assurance to the Leader of the Opposition because I received a letter of application for somebody to buy the 2 blocks of land in that area. My response was that, provided the price matched the Valuer-General's valuation, I would be quite happy for several reasons for that land to be sold to that party. The main reason is that eventually Bennett Street, the arterial road, will be one of the main roads into town. We have had no other specific use or offers of use for that land.

A couple of years ago, it was considered that it might be a good location for an interstate bus terminal but that never eventuated. With the development of the courts on one corner and the NT News diagonally opposite, it was timely that that particular land be developed. I was approached and, knowing I have to raise \$27m this year and that the land has a value of between \$400 000 and \$500 000, I was happy to allow the Department of Lands to negotiate the sale. The offer has been made to the interested developer.

Another reason why I made that decision was because of the downturn in the building industry at the moment. Whilst 6 months ago, the Burgundy Royale project, the Sheraton and many other projects were being constructed, at the moment no construction is occurring in the city. The developers indicated they would commence work on this land this year. I was satisfied with that when I made my decision. There are a few problems concerning sewerage lines and Australian National Railways want some land there. However, there is a development proposal for that land.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I continue to be amazed at the way this government gives away pieces of land. Knowing that he had to raise \$27m from land sales this year, I would have thought that the minister would have attempted to obtain more than the Valuer-General's valuation for that prime block of land by putting it up for open competition. Again, we have another example of the government - and this particular minister has a pretty good record for doing this - giving away our land without taking every possible step to obtain the maximum possible price for it.

The prize example was Gardens Hill. We all remember the Gardens Hill fracas. We gave away land at Gardens Hill at the Valuer-General's valuation - and I do not want to get into a debate over that price because I know there is some controversy there - because magnificent, high-quality apartment blocks were to be built there: 12-storey buildings overlooking the

Botanical Gardens and the amphitheatre - the prestige accommodation of Darwin. What have we got? We have a block of very nice Housing Commission accommodation and 12 or 13 town houses under construction which barely meet the covenants on the land. We are a long way from the proposals that the developers put forward when they were given the block at the Valuer-General's valuation.

I cannot understand how this government can give that land away in contradiction of the guidelines for direct sale. Now that we know some aspects of this, probably we will keep on pursuing the matter. The government cannot continue giving land away without taking steps to ensure that it obtains the maximum possible price for it. It cannot know that price until the land is put up either for auction or for tender. If the minister is committed to this course of action, has the Valuer-General determined a price and, if so, what is that price?

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I can understand the concern of the Leader of the Opposition. In 1984, the NT News site of 6000 m<sup>2</sup> was sold for about \$186 000. Across the road from it, about 2000 m<sup>2</sup> of land is valued at \$450 000. The Valuer-General tells us that valuations increase in the city area at around 6% or 7% a year. The reason why I am happy to proceed is that there are not too many people who want to put money into development at this stage because of the very high interest rates and the uncertainty in the economy. We need to be able to stimulate the building industry. No building is occurring at the moment. Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the downturn in housing and construction. We are trying to stimulate it.

This is 2½ times the value which the Valuer-General placed 2 years ago on a site on the opposite corner, which is a better block as far as I am concerned. This block of land is a third of the size at 2½ times the price. I do not think that is a bad deal. The real estate people are saying that auctions are not bringing high prices at the moment because there is not much money floating around. A block of flats on the corner of Daly and Cavenagh Streets went for only \$280 000. I think the price might have been all right. It is not a good market at the moment. It is really a buyer's market. However, the government wanted the development. No doubt the Leader of the Opposition has heard that it was not a direct sale. There are covenants ...

Mr Smith: What sort of development is it?

Mr DONDAS: We will show you in due course. The person has not put his proposal to the Planning Authority yet, but it is for a building of some substance. Probably it will cost \$6m or \$7m. Wait until the developer puts his plan before the Planning Authority.

Mr Smith: Could the minister give a direct answer to my direct question? Has he accepted the Valuer-General's valuation for that block and is that the price that he will demand from the developer?

Mr DONDAS: You will get a direct answer. Yes, I will accept the Valuer-General's total valuation but, in the event of engineering services needing to be carried out, we will deduct the cost of those services from the cost of the land if we do not have to spend the money, as is normal. That is why I cannot give an exact yes or no. If the developer has to pay for services such as roadworks or sewerage, those costs will be deducted from the price of the block as determined by the Valuer-General.



Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I would ask the minister whether the government has entered into or intends entering into any lease agreement with the developer for space in the proposed building?

Mr DONDAS: The short answer is yes.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I thank the minister for his simple and direct answer. What percentage of the space available in the proposed building is the government proposing to lease?

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I cannot give the Leader of the Opposition the exact percentage that will be leased because, at this stage, I am not quite sure how big the building will be. As I said a few moments ago, the developer is putting a proposal to the Planning Authority. When it has been dealt with, he will formalise his plan. When he goes to the Building Branch, we will know how much space he is providing.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, that was a deliberate attempt to avoid the intent of my question. Obviously, the developer would have a very good idea indeed of how much space the government intends to take in his development. I will rephrase the question. What sort of guarantees for rental of space has the Northern Territory government given to this developer?

Mr DONDAS: I believe negotiations involve an area of about 4000 m<sup>2</sup>.

Appropriation for division 65 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 66 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 29 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 51:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I have a few fairly basic questions. I do not think the minister will have any problems with them. A couple of them have been directed to me by members of his department.

On page 17 of Budget Paper No 4, under 'Schools South Branch', the minister will see that there has been an increase in administrative and operational expenses. From the next page, he will see that there has been a \$195 000 reduction in duty travel, transport, operational expenses and incidental and other expenses. That is a fairly substantial decline. I realise that he will find it rather awkward to answer straight off, but I would like his assurance that he will take note of my concern on that issue and advise me whether there is some danger that that reduction will impinge upon the ordinary programs or some of the special programs of the department, such as the RATE program.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, we are cutting back in the areas that are listed there. As honourable members are aware, the fiscal situation is much tighter this year than it has been for many years. There has been a vast cutback in Commonwealth expenditure on education which has required us to transfer moneys from certain areas into other areas to keep programs going. A decision was made to ensure that expenditure in the classroom - at the blackboard face - was kept constant.

Mr Ede: At the chalk face.

Mr MANZIE: From an ex-chalkie that is obviously an apt description. The idea was to keep all programs at schools going, and to ensure that education on the ground where it is occurring was not affected. It will mean some tightening up and hardship in the administrative area. However, at all times, we will be ensuring that it does not affect the quality of education delivered to students. As I said earlier during these sittings, since self-government our classroom expenditure has increased by 25% while our administrative expenditure has been reduced by 20%.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am particularly worried about the RATE program, travel for teacher in-service programs, and travel for bush teachers to take what are called 'free' weekends where they get a little bit of time off to travel to town to do shopping and those sorts of things. Will they be affected by this cutback?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I am glad the honourable member has raised those points, because those are areas of concern to me. The RATE program is funded by the Commonwealth specifically to train Aboriginal teachers in their own communities. It is an excellent program and it is one that I support fully.

I have spoken to Senator Susan Ryan, the federal Minister for Education, regarding the RATE program and its possible extension in the Territory, especially in the central and southern regions. I was given an assurance that she supported the program and would be increasing its funding. I mentioned in debate that there is some concern because of a hold-up in the funding even though the senator has given her support to the program. The bureaucracy seems to have caught up with it. I am a bit concerned because the next meeting of the National Aboriginal Education Council is in December. I have written to the senator to explain the problems, but I have no reason not to believe her promise about expanding the program. It is a program which I respect and one which will assist Aboriginalisation of schools with appropriately trained teachers. The particular budget allocation mentioned by the member for Stuart does not have any effect on that program.

We were receiving Commonwealth funding for in-service teacher training, but that has been stopped. We were concerned because teachers are scattered over a wide area in the Territory and it is important to offer them some professional support and to help them get together and keep abreast of the latest in teaching methods. This must improve the performance of teachers in the Territory which is already excellent. Because of the importance of this area, we are looking at ways and means of funding it by making savings elsewhere. I have had discussions with the Teachers Federation regarding this. We have looked at the possibility of offering training outside teaching time or by some other arrangement to ensure that in-service programs can be continued.

The honourable member can rest assured that I shall be doing everything I can, but I want to be careful that the funds I take out do not affect what happens at the chalk face. However, I am sure that somehow or other we can ensure that in-service training continues. Again, we will be pressuring the Commonwealth, as all the states are, to ensure that that particular provision is replaced next year.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I have one more point to raise. I am not even sure whether it is a condition of service, but I know it has been very important for people working out bush. I refer to the ability, every couple of months or so, for a teacher to take 1 free day to make a long weekend so that there is time to travel into town and do some shopping etc. I am worried that the cutbacks might affect teachers' ability to do that.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, that ability to be able to travel to town, say, to see the bank manager or conclude some business that is impossible to do in an isolated area will not be affected. Under the circumstances in which many of the teachers have to work in the remote areas, those special service conditions are necessary.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, my next question relates to the student assistance scheme referred to on page 49 of Budget Paper No 4. It states that the Tertiary Grants Scheme was to terminate on 31 December 1986, obviously in association with the commencement of the university. Mr Chairman, fortunately not all the people who want to attend university come from Darwin. I hope a fair proportion of them will be coming from Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine etc. Will there be a form of tertiary assistance which will enable them to be provided with at least the equivalent assistance, coming say from Alice Springs to Darwin, as was previously available to them when they went, for example, from Alice Springs to Adelaide?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I do not have details, but I believe what we are talking about is the scheme that enables students to travel interstate to attend a university. All students who are attending such institutions interstate will continue until they finish their courses. I believe new students who attend courses interstate that are not available in the Territory will still be able to receive assistance.

Air fares will be cut down to 2 return fares which is still way ahead of what occurs anywhere else in the country. Regarding the assistance that is provided internally in the Territory, I will have to have a look at what we are doing there because I cannot recall. Certainly, we shall not cut out assistance to students completely and we are still way ahead of what occurs anywhere else in the country. We will not be assisting people to go interstate to do courses that are available in the Territory. That is where the cutbacks will occur.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I wish to be assured that people from Alice Springs, who have an equal distance to travel virtually to a university in Adelaide or a university in Darwin, will get the same degree of assistance that they would have received before. I can see how the university will assist people in Darwin because it is nice and close to home and probably some of the costs of sending them interstate can be saved, but Alice Springs is not much better off by virtue of the expenditure of \$12m on a university. All I seek is an assurance that the students in Alice Springs will continue to receive the same level of support that has been provided to them in the past.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, obviously I cannot give a guarantee that they will receive the same level of support because, under that particular scheme, all Territory students will lose the ability of utilising 1 return air fare. Again, the assistance that we provide to tertiary students is unique in this country. The matter of assistance is something that we can probably look at most favourably if present circumstances change. At the moment, we have a situation where the federal government, through CTEC, is refusing to recognise the University College of the Northern Territory. Not only that, it has changed the rules, which is pretty mean, but it is something that we have grown to expect. However, it means that any avenue has been closed by which the Territory University College could have received funding or the students assistance. Changes have been made to exclude specifically institutions that are not recognised by CTEC. There is only 1, and that is the University College of the Northern Territory.

However, we know that situation will change and I hope that the first place we see that change is on the benches opposite. Possibly the member for Stuart might lead the push amongst his colleagues to encourage their federal colleagues to look again at what is required here. A change there would give us a chance to look at how we could spend some of that education vote in assisting students in the Alice Springs area who possibly may suffer some hardship because the Commonwealth is being a little bit mean regarding our efforts to provide what all other Australians have. I would like to thank the honourable member in anticipation of his support regarding that CTEC funding.

Appropriation for division 51 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 53:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, given what we keep hearing about the open college, I want to know whether the costings here are directly transferable to that or whether that will require a rehash of the whole section?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the costs will be contained completely within the appropriation. No extra cost is involved. The process of the open college is bringing together all those organisations that we have working now in remote areas: correspondence schools, a number of different schools of the air, adult educators and so on. Quite a number of groups are utilised in the provision of remote area education at the moment. This will bring it under 1 wing and utilise courses that are available at the DIT and the Community College of Central Australia and the people already employed to provide for those courses. The costings will be fully contained. There will be no extra staff, but we shall utilise what we have far more effectively.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, this may not be an appropriate time to ask this, but will the minister undertake to make a ministerial statement on the open college's functions during the course of next week?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I would be delighted to be able to provide that information in the form of a statement in the Assembly. Also, I will undertake to provide to the honourable member more detailed information regarding assistance to tertiary students throughout the Territory.

Appropriation for division 53 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 54:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, this relates to central Australia again. Given the answer to the question before last, from which it would appear that the people of central Australia are to receive nothing for nothing out of the university, can the minister identify that tutorials and various facilities will be provided to allow for a tertiary unit at the Community College of Central Australia so that people can undertake external courses, through the University College or the DIT, in Alice Springs and have facilities there to assist them to pursue their studies?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, what the member for Stuart is talking about is the ideal situation. We have started a process already regarding cooperation between the University College and the Darwin Institute of Technology and we intend to extend that. The honourable member might like to listen to me.

Mr Ede: I am all ears.

Mr Smith: Are you going to make sense for a change?

Mr MANZIE. Mr Chairman, that was very nasty. If honourable members do not think I am making sense, possibly I should sit down and let it go, Mr Chairman. I will be looking to be saved by honourable members, but I am glad they are listening.

As I was saying, we have started the process with consultation between the University College and the DIT regarding mutual assistance and crossover of courses and students. We have started that through the Community College of Central Australia as well. However, there is a fly in the ointment in the form, once again, of CTEC and the Commonwealth government. I received advice this morning that some very pointed instructions have been given to the Darwin Institute of Technology that any student enrolled in the university who intended to go across to DIT to do 1 or 2 subjects would have to pay a further administrative fee of \$250 in addition to any fee that that student may have paid to the University College. The Commonwealth is deliberately obstructing the move over the sharing of facilities because the University College is not recognised by CTEC, and no one is allowed to touch it; they might be poisoned by it.

I ask the honourable member opposite and all honourable members in the Assembly to do anything they can to assist us. This action interferes with the educational opportunities of Territorians and it has reached a stage where it is simply cheap political point scoring. I believe the Chairman of CTEC probably has more to do with it than anyone else. Hopefully, he will change his mind. As I said, eventually we will win on this one and I will be only too happy to be able to extend all those services to the Community College of Central Australia. However, at the moment, we have problems even with extending those services to students of the Darwin Institute of Technology because of the Commonwealth's attitude towards it. I know it will change but, with some help from opposition members, it might change faster.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I am sure the minister has a very intelligent answer to this question. With the university starting at the old Darwin Hospital site, the added allocation standing against the new University College here and the reduction in the number of students at the DIT campus, I thought that we could expect to see some reduction in the allocation to DIT. With the establishment of the university in town, there will not be so many students at DIT nor as many staff. It would be reasonable to expect a smaller increase in funding.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I have been saying for quite a while that University College facilities are not meant to provide alternative education for students attending the Darwin Institute of Technology. We are providing a facility where Territory students can obtain a university education. We have 500 students presently interstate. We have only one third of the national average for matriculants continuing into university education. We have a large number of people who neither attend university nor move interstate.

The DIT will continue to provide a large number of courses in the advanced education area. It will be increasing its courses in some areas. The Bachelor of Business Management is one that springs to mind, along with several in the arts area which will complement the University College rather than compete against it. The idea is not to bring students out of the Darwin Institute of Technology and send them to the University College, but to cater for those students who wish to do university courses. As I pointed out earlier in these sittings, already we have some 180 applications. Today, I

was informed that we have 40 applications from Taylor's College in Malaysia. Some concern has been expressed to me about a fear that there might be a deliberate attempt by the Commonwealth to block those students from migrating here for the purpose of study. I hope that does not happen because not only will it reflect badly on the Northern Territory, it will reflect badly on the whole of Australia. I will be writing to the federal Ministers for Education and Immigration to try to prevent that happening.

Again, for the member for Nhulunbuy's benefit, we are not looking at transferring students or courses from DIT to the University College. We will not be offering similar courses at the same time at both institutions. There are some courses with subjects that interrelate and arrangements have been made between the warden and the director of the institute which allow students attending one institution to study subjects at the other and vice versa. As I said earlier, the Commonwealth has said that those students will have to pay the administration fee of \$250 at both colleges if they do that. Probably we will sort that out in some way because we want to make the most effective use of the facilities. We do not have any intention of closing the DIT down. It is doing a tremendous job. There are 8500 students attending the DIT and it is growing all the time. It is becoming overcrowded. Library facilities are inadequate now. Although it is a reasonably new library, it is having trouble catering for so many students. I am very pleased to see that the Commonwealth has decided to build the new administration building because the demountables are very overcrowded.

I am very pleased that the Commonwealth has done that, because it was definitely needed. The Commonwealth tried to use it as a lever to make us establish the university there, but it has realised that ploy would not work and that the new facility still has to be built because the DIT is growing and operating so well that it can stand alone. It will go on to bigger and better things. Certainly, I have no intention of moving students out of the DIT into the University College although I suppose that may be contrary to the wishes of the member for Nhulunbuy.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I do not wish students to be moved anywhere. The question was quite simply put and I will make it even simpler for the minister if he requires it. Can I take it from his response that no courses are to be moved from the existing DIT campus to the new university site?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, all students presently attending the DIT can remain at the DIT to continue their courses. Bachelor of Arts courses will be offered at the University College and at the DIT. Those courses will involve different subjects, with an ability to interchange subjects and therefore broaden and change particular courses.

Mr B. Collins: The arts students are being encouraged to go to the university.

Mr MANZIE: Certainly they are. There will be a far broader range of subjects for them to choose from at the University College. The opportunity is there for them to do that if they wish, but they do not have to. They can still complete their courses at the DIT.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, during my visit to Katherine last week to talk about the issue of statehood, I became aware of concern about the number of students presently at the Katherine Rural College. I understand that fewer than 20 students attend the Katherine Rural College at present. Like it or not, the mighty Commonwealth government has spent a great deal of money on

facilities there. Obviously, there is a problem in attracting and holding students there at present. How does the government intend to approach the problem of attracting more students to attend the college and to stay there to finish their courses?

Mr MANZIE: I had hoped the Leader of the Opposition would raise that question with me privately. Certainly, it will make the Commonwealth look twice at its funding there.

Mr Chairman, I can assure you that I am very concerned about the low student numbers at Katherine Rural College. We will be looking at any possible innovation we can to encourage more people to attend. That would include broadening the courses available there in order to attract more people as Katherine grows as a community. A number of innovations have been implemented. The stock handling course was one, and every student who completed it found a job. It was very successful. Innovations are being sought continually in order to increase the number of students. It is not just a matter of looking for students who are going to attend the 12-month or 2-year courses. We are looking at short term, 6-month and 3-month courses and anything which will provide training for employment. People who have attended those courses have gone straight into productive jobs and therefore we will be looking at all possible innovations.

Appropriation for division 55 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 21:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have 2 questions for the minister. First, do we have any results of the 'Crocodile Dundee' promotion in north America, in terms of the interest it has created in the Northern Territory and is there any way that you are able to quantify that? Secondly, what type of promotion does the Tourist Commission intend to undertake to promote the south road once the sealing is complete?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, the effect of 'Crocodile Dundee' in America is probably difficult to quantify in terms of tourists who actually arrive here in the Northern Territory. However, I think it is fair to say that the success of the film in America is unparalleled. It is still running number 1 at the box office and it has grossed somewhere in the vicinity of \$100m. I am not too sure how many people have actually seen the film.

I will give an idea of the type of promotion we conducted, coupled with the actual launch of the film in the United States. Promotion will be similar in Europe, Japan, Asia and South America. We picked the top 60 radio stations throughout the United States and did a joint promotion with the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation, Qantas and Ansett. Competitions were run on each of those 60 radio stations and prizes were offered. These involved a return trip for 2 to Australia. The winners will be coming to Kakadu. That was part of the promotion as well as ...

Mr B. Collins: See Kakadu while it is still there.

Mr HANRAHAN: It took a while to think of that one. I was watching you churning it over.

We were represented in that campaign as far as our \$250 000 contribution would allow. We have contributed an additional \$250 000 over and above the marketing budget that is shown here for the launch in Europe, England and

Japan. The difficulty that we have with only 1 office in Los Angeles is that, physically, we simply cannot cope with the inquiries and the people wanting to make bookings. In the United States, one officer actually handles the market for the whole of America plus Canada. We are reviewing that situation. There is a definite need also to establish an office in Vancouver. In terms of quantifying the effect of that promotion, the response through our office in America has been overwhelming.

The response to the competitions through the radio stations is virtually unparalleled. All flights leaving the west coast of the United States to all ports in Australia are full. People require a longer lead time to make a booking than they did this time last year. That is a little difficult at the moment with the stack up of aeroplanes in Sydney and Melbourne. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition is aware that the federal government is moving fairly quickly to try to rationalise those services into Sydney.

Inquiries resulting from the direct promotion and showing of the film have been huge. Accommodation bookings for next year at Yulara and Alice Springs indicate that September, October and November are almost full. That has not happened before. Definitely, the tourist season has been extended. In relation to the Centre, it runs virtually from the beginning of February to the end of November with people still arriving in December and January.

In relation to the south road, I had conversations with the South Australian Minister for tourism and the South Australian Department of Tourism 3 weeks ago as a result of the Premier of South Australia raising the subject during his visit. The South Australian government intends to approach the federal government with a suggestion that the opening of the south road take place at Port Augusta for several reasons. We are trying to capitalise on that in the sense that we are undertaking a joint promotion apart from the Tourist Commission marketing program aimed at the motorist. Hopefully, the joint promotion could involve such things as a veterans' cycling race up the south road and a display of veteran cars, apart from the ongoing promotion. I will advise members as soon as those details are finalised. Even though it will occur some 9 months after the road opens, one of the biggest promotions will be the solar car race next year.

Mr SETTER: Mr Chairman, I thought it opportune for me to make a contribution to the answer to this particular question.

Last Friday, I was talking to the manager of a Darwin hotel - not one of the 5-star hotels. He told me that, over the last 2 or 3 weeks, he has received 1 call a day from the United States requesting such information as how far Darwin is from Kakadu, what the accommodation is like there, the cost of accommodation and what facilities are available. If that is any indication of the sort of influx that we can expect next year, I think that we are in for a boom time. Quite obviously, 'Crocodile Dundee' and the advertising that we have undertaken will result in a tremendous number of tourists. The only thing that concerns me about this is the cost of internal air fares. Many tourists are coming from Los Angeles to Cairns and we need to get them from Cairns across to Darwin.

Members interjecting.

Mr SETTER: If honourable members are not interested in my contribution ...

Mr B. Collins: We are not.



Mr SETTER: I am trying to answer the question that the Leader of the Opposition asked. Quite obviously, he is not interested in receiving a sensible answer. Qantas will be putting on new flights between Cairns, Darwin and Singapore from April next year. I wish these would start much sooner because I was told by the manager of Qantas that his company will be able to sell packages out of Los Angeles into Darwin via Cairns. There is a 3-day delay between aircraft arriving in Cairns and other aircraft departing from Cairns for Singapore which allows the American tourist to have a look at the Barrier Reef and the Cairns area and then catch a Qantas flight to Darwin at a cheap rate. That would be a much better deal for tourists than flying into Cairns and paying the internal air fare. If Qantas can sell that package, we are really in for a boom time. We will be looking at building more hotels in the Top End and creating more infrastructure. Most of those people will come to visit Kakadu in the member for Arafura's electorate. I am sure he will be very pleased about that.

Mr B. Collins: I just hope it stays there for long enough.

Mr SETTER: That is up to your mob, mate.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, at the risk of aggravating the exasperated sighs of the member for Arafura, I want to relate a story as well.

The member for MacDonnell and I were at Alice Springs Airport waiting to go to Hermannsburg last week and we started talking to 3 American tourists who were about to travel on the mail run which they were looking forward to with some anticipation. They will never believe a politician again because the member for MacDonnell told them they would travel in a twin-engine plane, and we saw them get into a single-engine plane. The point of the story is that they were most concerned that the only information they could obtain in New York about the Territory was about Ayers Rock. They had a particular interest in staying on a cattle station and it was not until they got to Alice Springs that they gained information about Wallara Ranch - which is not really a cattle station - and found out about the mail run. I make the point that, at least in New York, the message is not getting through, particularly in terms of the variety of things one can do in the Northern Territory. I hope that the honourable minister will ask the Tourist Commission to address that matter.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, certainly I will continue to convince my colleagues of the necessity to give me more money so that, in the interests of tourism, I can do 2 things. The first will be to open an extra office in the United States, and we all know how expensive that will be with the state of the dollar at the moment.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned that the tourists he spoke with travelled on the mail run. That particular tour is promoted in a brochure, 'NT Territory Holidays', managed by Destination Australia Marketing, which was put together by Investnorth to promote certain major hotels in the Territory. That booklet won all the prizes at the Australian Tourist Awards. In fact, I purchased some 50 000 copies specifically for the American market and they have been over there for some 6 weeks. Hopefully, most of the travel agents that we have contacted do have that book. The problem is that people see a film and want to know all about it straight away. We have 1 office and a limited number of incoming telephone lines. We are trying to address the problem as best as we can.

Appropriation for division 21 agreed to.

Appropriation for divisions 20 and 22 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 25:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have a large number of questions concerning the Trade Development Zone that I wish to address to the minister. He has been given notice of most of these questions.

First, how many consultants does the Trade Development Zone employ, who are they and how long are they employed for? Secondly, were the consultants that have been appointed in Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia appointed by the main consultant?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for giving me advance notice of his 28 questions regarding the zone. We have already had some conversations during the course of the day about them. I might just add, at the outset, that I do not have any problems with the majority of them. I am quite happy with the arrangements. However, I would comment that some of the questions seem to be orientated towards casting a reflection upon the character of the consultant. Perhaps it is only the way they are worded and it may well be my interpretation.

Mr Smith: It certainly is.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, the Trade Development Zone employs one consultant in Hong Kong and sub-consultants in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Taiwan. The Hong Kong consultant coordinates their activities in the South-east Asian region. The Hong Kong consultant was appointed in May 1985, for a 12-month period, and reappointed in May 1986 for a 2-year period. The sub-consultants were identified by K.K. Yeung Management Consultants, subject to the approval of the Trade Zone Authority. After meetings and discussions with those sub-consultants, they were approved by the board of the authority.

Mr SMITH: Is the minister able to name the sub-consultants?

Mr HANRAHAN: I do not have any difficulty in naming the sub-consultants. I did not realise that that was what the Leader of the Opposition required. I will be happy to obtain those names for him.

Mr SMITH: Certainly no reflection is intended in the question concerning the main consultant. However, that person does have a very important role to play in the way the Trade Development Zone is structured. How was the main consultant selected and how was the credibility of the main consultant checked before the appointment was made?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I have those answers and I could probably combine the 2 questions.

It was deemed appropriate by the government to have consultants with a knowledge of Asian business practices and who were acceptable to local industry. Management consultancy experience was also deemed to be an important prerequisite. K.K. Yeung Management Consultants was identified as meeting these requirements. K.K. Yeung enjoys an excellent reputation in financial, banking and business circles in Hong Kong. The performance of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants has been exceptional. This has been confirmed by subsequent approaches from 2 Australian states and 3 overseas countries for that organisation to perform duties similar to those undertaken for the Trade Development Zone Authority. As Mr Yeung felt these would result in a conflict of interest, he did not take them up.

In answer to the Leader of the Opposition's next question, I am prepared to advise that appropriate references were obtained and those are confidential.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I want to make one brief comment in response to statements made by the minister about the character of Mr K.K. Yeung. I was responsible initially for querying the nature of contracts or arrangements entered into between the government and K.K. Yeung. If those arrangements were outrageous - and they may not have been - I want to state that this would in no way reflect on the character of Mr K.K. Yeung. Rather, it would reflect on the ineptness and inefficiency of the minister responsible. It is a favourite ploy of this government to deflect towards other people questions about its own competence. Often the opposition is criticised for attacking the public service or public servants. We are attempting to find out just how efficiently the TDZ is being run, and whether or not Territorians are getting a fair deal. I really do not see how the minister can draw that extraordinary long bow and suggest that, if K.K. Yeung is getting a great deal, it is a reflection on his character that he has signed up for it.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I cannot let that go unchallenged because nothing was further from my mind. I simply felt that some of the questions relating to references were quite irrelevant. I am quite aware of the direction that these questions have taken and, as I indicated at the start, I have no problem in answering any of them.

Mr SMITH: What are the fee levels paid to K.K. Yeung and the other consultants, how were they established and in what currency were they paid?

Mr HANRAHAN: The fee levels paid are as follows: K.K. Yeung receives a retainer of \$7500 per month. K.K. Yeung's supervisory fees are \$2000 per consultant per month and the sub-consultants receive \$3000 per consultant per month. Those are Australian dollar figures. These fees were established by negotiation, with the benefit of the experience of the quantum and the variety of responsibilities under the previous contract. The fees are paid in Hong Kong dollars, converted at the current rate of exchange.

Mr SMITH: Can I confirm that each of the consultants is paid the sum of \$3000 per month?

Mr HANRAHAN: That is correct.

Mr SMITH: What expenses are met above and beyond the base consultancy fees and how much has been paid to K.K. Yeung in expenses so far?

Mr HANRAHAN: The direct operating expenses incurred in supporting Trade Development Zone operations include local advertising, travel and accommodation on Trade Development Zone Authority business, and time for support staff at Trade Development Zone seminars and overseas launches. These are covered by the Trade Development Zone Authority. The total expenses paid to K.K. Yeung Management Consultants to date are \$186 000.

In relation to the previous question, I advise honourable members that K.K. Yeung's staff includes 3 persons who are applicable to the zone.

Mr SMITH: What were the terms of the original agreement with K.K. Yeung and when did that agreement expire?

Mr HANRAHAN: The original agreement with K.K. Yeung Management Consultants provided for a fee of \$3000 per month, excluding all approved expenses. Success fees were payable for a period of up to 4 years, on signing contracts to establish industry in the zone, as follows: 2% of contracts worth up to \$1m; 0.5% on contracts from \$1m to \$5m; and 1% on contracts over \$5m. Time costs were also paid for negotiations undertaken at the request of the authority. This agreement expired on 13 May 1986.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, we have omitted a couple of questions. We found that K.K. Yeung's monthly entitlement had gone up from \$3000 to \$13 500. Is he still eligible to claim an hourly rate for any of the work that he does for the Trade Development Zone under the new arrangement?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, to the best of my knowledge, the answer is no but I am aware that there were 4 instances, which I believe occurred under the previous agreement, for which time costs were paid.

Mr SMITH: What amount of money has been set aside in the 1986-87 TDC budget as a retainer for K.K. Yeung Management Consultants?

Mr HANRAHAN: A retainer of \$90 000 has been set aside for K.K. Yeung Management Consultants in the 1986-87 budget. A further \$108 000 has been set aside for retainers for the sub-consultants.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I do not think the minister understood the intention of the question. I will rephrase it. How much money has been set aside in the 1986-87 budget as the possible maximum amount of money that may be paid to K.K. Yeung in that period?

Mr HANRAHAN: I will have to spend a few minutes working that out. The total amount of money in 1986-87 for consultants is \$480 000.

Mr SMITH: Would it be reasonable to expect that, from that amount, \$9000 a month will go to the 3 sub-consultants, totalling \$108 000 and the remainder would probably go to Mr K.K. Yeung?

Mr HANRAHAN: The \$480 000 figure was incorrect. The figure is \$460 000. It is broken down into retainers shown here as \$192 000. That conflicts with the figures I gave of \$108 000 and \$90 000. The commission payments are estimated at \$150 000, the expenses at \$48 000 and the contingency allowable is \$22 000.

Mr SMITH: Am I to assume that that figure of \$460 000 does not include payments made to the sub-consultants, which represent an additional amount over and above the \$460 000?

Mr HANRAHAN: I will clarify that. I am advised that \$460 000 is the total amount for consultants in the 1986-87 budget.

Mr SMITH: Obviously, that needs clarification because I do not think those figures stack up. Perhaps we can get clarification during the course of this debate.

Mr HANRAHAN: We can.

Mr SMITH: How many firms have signed letters of intent as a direct consequence of the work of the consultants and what checks are made on the commercial bona fides of signatories to letters of intent?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, 12 companies have signed letters of intent as a direct result of work by the sub-consultants. One other company had entered into discussions prior to the appointment of the sub-consultants and was signed up with their assistance. Zone procedures provide for commercial checks and preparation and approval of a business plan prior to the signing of pre-lease agreements. These checks are conducted progressively or on an ad hoc basis depending on the individual situation. Where appropriate, Business Migration procedures require presentation of financial and tax records for 3 years and incorporate character checks. The majority of firms establishing in the TDZ will come under Business Migration.

Independent commercial information has been obtained on a number of companies. Under these procedures, 8 of the 13 companies have been verified and the remainder will be verified prior to commencement of operation in the zone.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I will combine 2 questions. What is the proposed level of capital investment in the zone indicated by the letters of intent signed so far and how much money has been paid to K.K. Yeung Management Consultants as a result of those letters of intent?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, the proposed capital investment in the TDZ is \$A6.286m. The amount of money paid in fees to K.K. Yeung in 1985-86 was \$A45 551 and, to date in 1986-87, \$A9532.

Mr SMITH: Is that the complete amount of money that he is entitled to as a result of the letters of intent that have been signed so far?

Mr HANRAHAN: No, Mr Chairman. Under the success-fee formula K.K. Yeung is entitled to a further \$A40 276 in success fees for letters of intent. Of this, \$9532 will be paid on establishment of 2 of the companies in the zone. The balance will be paid on the basis of 50% on approval of the business plan and 50% on establishment in the zone. The level of investment is to be reassessed after 3 years of operation and, where appropriate, the establishment - that is, start-up fee - will be varied in favour of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants or the authority, whichever is applicable.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I need to go back 2 or 3 steps because I am somewhat confused.

We heard that, under the original agreement that applied until May 1985, K.K. Yeung received a commission in 2 stages: when the letter of intent was signed, and when the money was actually committed to the zone. Is that also part of the second agreement from June 1986? If that is so, how does that correspond with the answer that the minister has just given which seems to be a variation of that?

Mr HANRAHAN: Is the Leader of the Opposition querying the agreement prior to June 1986?

Mr SMITH: No, I am querying the renewed agreement and whether it has similar provisions in terms of commissions paid on statement of intent.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I think the Leader of the Opposition is aware that a payment was made to K.K. Yeung, in recognition of the manufacturers who are coming into the zone, prior to or as part of the renegotiation of the contract. That was an amount of approximately \$45 000. The success-fee formula relates to the current and existing agreement. A percentage of the

success fee is paid, depending on the level of the investment, on the signing of a letter of intent. Under the new agreement, it is paid only when the business plan is approved by the Trade Development Zone Board of Management. That is what is called a success fee or that is the interpretation that is given to a letter of intent. He receives the balance of payment now on the start up of the manufacturing base in the zone. Thus, he receives a further commission ratio which is on the same basis as that he receives for a success fee.

Mr SMITH: Can the minister tell us what that basis is?

Mr HANRAHAN: Those commission rates have changed. I will find out the current commission rates and the levels to which they apply. They were varied on renegotiation.

Mr SMITH: What legal advice has been sought and obtained by the minister on whether the letters of intent bind TDZ signatories legally to commit the level of capital investment promised in the letters of intent?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I have not sought any legal advice. Informal advice, sought by the authority, indicates that such a document, countersigned by both parties, constitutes a contract but, ultimately, this can only be confirmed in a court of law.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, if it is the view that the letters of intent are legally binding, can the minister advise the cost of undertaking an overseas lawsuit to enforce any agreements that are not honoured?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I cannot estimate the cost of a lawsuit if one were undertaken. However, applying what is actually required for the signing of this letter of intent, as it seems to be called, I am quite happy with the situation.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, when is the first firm expected to commence operations in the TDZ, how many companies have given firm starting dates for the commencement of operations and what are they?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, the first firm is expected to commence operations in February 1987. Commencement times from then range from February 1987 to October 1987, with the majority expected to be in place and operating by June 1987. The lead times depend really on Business Migration approvals, finance availability, capital equipment and, of course, labour availability. Of the 14 firms that we have signatories for, I think firm commitment dates have been obtained for 11, but I can verify that for the Leader of the Opposition in half a second.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, have any Australian firms signed letters of intent and are Australian firms eligible for the same range of incentives as overseas firms?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, 1 Australian company has signed a letter of intent which is subject to final approval. I think I covered this recently in a statement to the Assembly. Australian firms are equally eligible for the range of incentives available to overseas companies.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I think this question is a repeat of an earlier question but, if the minister is happy to answer it again, I will ask it: what is the total amount of money actually committed to the TDZ by firms which have signed letters of intent? I think the answer is \$6.2m.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I think the Leader of the Opposition is talking about the total level of investment commitment. Is that right?

Mr SMITH: Sorry, you are right.

Mr HANRAHAN: I had a different interpretation on that. I thought the question was whether the firms had lodged actual funds?

Mr SMITH: You are right.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, no firms have specifically lodged funds with the Trade Development Zone Authority and no such funds have been requested. The posting of securities and bonds is required when lease documents are signed. Of course, a number of the people coming into the zone have deposited funds in Australian financial institutions as part of Business Migration procedures.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the follow-up question is: when would the minister expect to sign the first lease agreements and thus receive the first money?

Mr HANRAHAN: We would have already signed 2 of the lease agreements, Mr Chairman, had it not been for a report from the IAC.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, can it be implied from that that there is some doubt about the start-up date for some of the firms which would have been the earliest to establish in the zone?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, in fact, the general manager of the zone returned only yesterday or this morning. We need to go back to Hong Kong to speak to 2 of the firms. One of the firms that was due to sign was to be the first in operation and would have been one of our biggest successes. That is HKI Investments, the knitwear people, who have expanded from 1 machinery run to 3 and have virtually trebled their warehouse space. A major effect will be experienced by that firm if the recommendations of the IAC report are adopted, even though the recommendations are for phasing-out after 5 years. Currently, we are approaching them and explaining the position and climate that is relevant here at the moment. I am sure honourable members opposite would not agree with a strategy of not advising the investors of the current situation or the IAC report. However, we feel that, if the recommendations in the IAC report are adopted, they will strike a major blow to the Trade Development Zone. We are pretty sure that the plan and the strategy will allow them at least to recoup their investment in that 5-year period. It is subject to negotiation at the moment.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, basically my question is for the public record. The IAC report has been canvassed in the press, but could the minister advise the Assembly precisely which aspects of the IAC's report and recommendations are inhibiting the growth of the Trade Development Zone?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, for the public record, I refer the member for Arafura to my answer to the Assembly in this morning's question time when I spoke at length about the 3 aspects of the IAC report that affected the manufacturers, and moves being undertaken by the Northern Territory government to overcome those proposed disadvantages.

Mr Coulter: It is only a draft report.

Mr SMITH: Yes, the point is that it is only a draft report, and I think this morning in his response the honourable minister invited the opposition to join with him to oppose the recommendations of the draft report. The minister can take it for granted that he has our support on that. We shall certainly be making an effort there.

What incentives have been offered to the signatories of the letter of intent?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, incentives offered to individual companies are commercially confidential and vary between companies, but I will touch on the areas in which incentives apply. As a matter of principle, the authority was determined to be more generous with incentives in the establishment phase for the early attraction of companies. Quite attractive packages have been offered to form part of the overall marketing strategy.

All incentives are performance rated which means that, if companies do not perform, the incentives are all recoupable. Incentives offered have tended to include lower start-up rentals or, in some cases, rental holidays, relocation assistance, training assistance and export freight assistance. No incentives are ongoing. They are designed to assist in the establishment phase, when cash flow is at its tightest, and are typically limited to the first 2 or 3 years of operation.

What other incentives are there, if any? I will answer that part of the question because it involves negotiations in which I was involved personally. In response to a substantially increased level of investment in the zone, which is applicable to the people mentioned in question 21, the authority has increased the level of training assistance, and will pay import duty and taxes on capital equipment being imported. It should be noted that the majority of equipment involved is only dutiable at 2%. Mr Chairman, that relates to the company that I referred to which is coming in with 1 machinery run and X amount of factory space but, in fact, trebled its investment and space requirements. Everything related to that investment virtually trebled, and it is only in that particular instance that an additional incentive has been offered outside the guidelines that I mentioned before.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, in the answer that the minister gave in question time this morning, he said that, if the IAC recommendations were implemented, the job of the Trade Development Zone Authority would become more difficult but not impossible. Could the minister advise the Assembly, in a more precise fashion - particularly because of the way he is signing leases - how the government would assess the potential outcome of any implementation of the IAC recommendations?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I am quite happy to make the submission by the Northern Territory government to the IAC available to the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Arafura so that they can see exactly what we are talking about.

In broad terms, it would restrict certain operators from even contemplating use of the zone, but there are some areas of industry that we might still be able to encourage into the zone. That relates to quotas, the type of concessions that are available and export markets.

Mr B. COLLINS: Does that include the 12 which have signed letters of intent?



Mr HANRAHAN: It includes some of the people coming into the zone. It would be very difficult for them to have an ongoing role in the zone when compared to the current incentives that are available. I think the member really needs to read the document to comprehend the situation.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I am not sure that the minister can answer this question. What limits are there to the incentive packages being offered in the Trade Development Zone and who authorises the incentive packages?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I can speak in broad terms about the guidelines. The board has determined guidelines for the Trade Development Zone incentive packages. Packages are formulated on the basis of the value of the industry to the zone, job creation, whether it is a new industry, and spin-off benefits to local industries. All agreements, including incentives, are subject to the approval of the Trade Development Zone Authority.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, given the answer to a previous question regarding the IAC that there is a possibility that a proportion of the 12 companies who have signed up will find it uneconomic if the IAC report is accepted, have instructions been given to K.K. Yeung Management Consultants not to proceed further with people who fall into that category until such time as the position is clear regarding the IAC report?

Mr HANRAHAN: It is certainly not a strategy that I would agree to at this stage. The cost of attempting to encourage further people into the zone is minimal at this time. We have gone directly to Senator Button, the Prime Minister and Minister Dawkins to ask for an early intervention, if possible, on the draft recommendations to remove the hiatus of uncertainty about the ongoing benefits that will be available to industries established in the zone after the 5-year period. As I said this morning, I would rather act in a positive vein because the indications are that the recommendations of the IAC report are totally contrary to the publicly-expressed views of the Prime Minister and Senator Button. I tend to think that the overall strategy of IAC in this and other recommendations is contrary to federal Labor government policy on the removal of tariffs. I am not saying they will agree with us instantly, but we are doing everything possible to ensure that the problem is dealt with as quickly as possible. Of course, the answer is that we do not agree with the recommendations of the IAC report.

Obviously, we would monitor any new manufacturers or industries expressing an interest in coming into the zone. As I explained earlier, our strategy now is to inform those that come into the zone about the IAC report. That is only fair and honest, but obviously we would be making that assessment at the time that someone expressed an interest.

Mr SMITH: Are firms in the TDZ receiving an electricity subsidy and, if so, what is the extent of that subsidy? Are firms in the TDZ exempt from stamp duty and payroll tax?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, no firms are receiving an electricity subsidy. The Trade Development Zone's legislation provides for freedom from certain Northern Territory charges. The previous minister mentioned in his second-reading speech that firms would be free from payroll tax and stamp duty. Regulations to this effect are in the course of preparation. Firms will pay an administrative fee to cover the day-to-day administrative costs of running the zone.

Mr SMITH: Is it correct that Darwin International Textile Pty Ltd has been guaranteed a monopoly position for 5 years and is it possible for that monopoly position to be extended beyond that time?

Mr HANRAHAN: It has a monopoly position for 5 years. It will not be possible to extend beyond that and it is not part of any agreement.

Mr SMITH: What is the total cost for funding of stage 1A of the TDZ?

Mr HANRAHAN: The estimated completion cost for the construction of stage 1A is \$12.026m of which \$4.216m is funded under the Department of Transport and Works allocation for works external to the zone. Stage 1A has been completed to schedule and below budget. \$974 000 has been handed back to Treasury from the original allocation of \$13m for this project.

Mr SMITH: This is the last of the questions on notice, but there are some more to come. Is it a fact that, in December 1985, the Under Treasurer raised doubts about the cost benefit value of the increase in cost of Stage 1A from \$9m to what it is now?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, the question is indeed an interesting one, as I will highlight later in these sittings. In relation to the Cabinet submission seeking additional program funding and cash, Treasury sought explanation of the variation from the original \$9m figure set down in the master plan for the Trade Development Zone and queried the cost benefit ratio in relation to clients attracted. The original 1984 estimate of \$9m to \$10m was the result of a desk exercise carried out by individual divisions of the Department of Transport and Works from the sketch layout plan of the zone. No site survey or costing of particular site characteristics was necessary for the master plan. In seeking funding, it was also necessary to include an inflation factor for construction during 1986.

Cabinet Decision No 3719 of 16 August 1984 confirmed Cabinet commitment to the establishment of a Trade Development Zone in Darwin. Cabinet recognised that the decision to proceed had to be taken ahead of the attraction of customers. Naturally, the cost of headworks imposes a greater cost, measured against the cost of the initial buildings only. At the time of Treasury's comments, some 1900 m<sup>2</sup> of space had been signed for. Current letters of intent cover 7000 m<sup>2</sup>. The authority is budgeting to let 5000 m<sup>2</sup> per annum.

Mr SMITH: I want to ask a couple of questions concerning the land title at the Trade Development Zone. How is the title to the Trade Development Zone currently held? Do any of the agreements with signatories of letters of intent to operate in the TDZ include an option to convert leasehold occupation to freehold at any time? Is that possible now, under the arrangements that the government has for land in that area, or will it require further legislation or further administrative action?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I really am not too sure of the actual title vesting the land in the authority. All space is leased to manufacturers coming into the zone. At the last 2 board meetings, we have had 3 submissions from consultants, covering various aspects of how future land management of the zone will occur, whether it will be freehold and directly available for sale or something else. We are looking at all the options. We are allowing actual freehold title to be issued and for the area of the zone to be available for purchase by prospective investors looking for a rental return. All those options are before the board at the moment. I have seen some of the recommendations but the proposal is not finalised at this stage because we are

seeking further information on it. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition will be able to obtain that sort of information if he takes up my offer of a full briefing on the zone.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I have a few questions. First, I would like to go back to the question relating to legal advice sought by the minister. I did not get a clear understanding of the answer to that. Were the actual letters of intent given to the Attorney-General? Did his department go through them and was his advice that they were legally binding if signed? If so, to what extent were they binding? Was a letter of intent binding to the extent that K.K. Yeung had to be paid or was it binding to the extent that they had to move on to the next step? What was legally binding about the letter of intent?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I reiterate that, as minister, I have not sought any legal advice nor have I considered it necessary. The information that I have, which was related to me by the chairman of the zone and by the board, is that informal advice has indicated to them that the letter of intent and the procedures followed by the board are legally binding. I would prefer to approach it from the other angle; that is, if there is any advice contrary to that, I would be happy to read it.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, that is not the point that I am making. I know that the letter of intent is probably legally binding to some extent but what is legally binding about it? Is it the making of a statement of intent or does the person have to proceed to the next intermediate step in the development or is it only binding to the extent that we have to pay K.K. Yeung?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I am not a person sufficiently schooled in the law of contracts although I did study it at one stage. The interpretations that can be placed upon what is a contract and what is not a contract are quite varied. I can only go back to what I said. I have no reason to believe that the letter of intent is not legally binding. The extent to which it is legally binding varies according to the people, the type of deals they have, and what stage they are at. I do not have a definitive answer for the honourable member.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, would the minister undertake to forward those letters of intent to the Attorney-General so that his department can provide advice to this Assembly as to the extent to which they are binding? I ask this, knowing that these letters of intent are apparently all we have by way of commitments at this stage. I think it would be interesting to have an opinion from our Attorney-General as to how binding the contractual obligations of the various parties are.

Mr HANRAHAN: As I said earlier, I believe them to be a contract. I would make one additional point because I would not like honourable members to be operating under the misapprehension that all we have is a so-called letter of intent which is a worthless document. I think it is important for honourable members to bear in mind that the majority of people that have signed those letters of intent have also lodged their business plans with the board for approval. The details required in those business plans, associated with the Business Migration applications, are very extensive indeed. Requirements include actual figures for 3 years past trading, tax statements, evidence of deposits in banks, proof of security, proof of financial capacity and character references. That sort of information has been dealt with by the board with the majority of people coming into the zone. However, I will think about it. I am not prepared to give a commitment that I will advise the

Assembly of the legal nature of the letters of intent because, as I said, I do not have any reason to believe that they are not a sufficient form of contract. However, I will consider it further.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, this is not good enough. We already have a vast commitment to this project and the minister blandly informs us that he will think about telling this Assembly about the extent to which we are likely to get anything back from it. It is not good enough to talk about Business Migration. I know something of that process, and I know that the lodgment of those plans has nothing whatsoever to do with the ability of the person to migrate. Rather it concerns the importation of capital which does not have to be utilised for those particular plans but can be diverted into another project as long as it remains in the country for a specified period.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I am fairly easy to get on with. I do not have any major objection to obtaining an opinion on the procedures that are followed by the board as they pertain to the effect of the contract between the authority and the investor or the proposed manufacturer in the zone.

Mr EDE: My thanks for that.

My next question relates to the cost-benefit analysis that was conducted, presumably, by the minister's department before the Trade Development Zone was entered into. I am asking if he will make that available to us, together with a notation on the variations that have so far come to light with regard to the costs of setting up the zone.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I have offered the Leader of the Opposition a full briefing on the zone. If he wishes, he can raise all those additional questions at that time and, if he feels that he has not had an adequate answer to them, he is quite welcome at any time to bring the matter back into this Assembly or to approach me for an answer. If questions relate to cost-benefit ratios and so on, I think it would be necessary to expand on the exact details required.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would be amazed if an operation of this size, costing many millions of dollars, was embarked upon without a cost-benefit analysis being carried out to establish, for example, what the internal rate of return would be or what particular discount rate had to be applied to the particular project. Was a cost-benefit analysis carried out by the government before the committing of funds?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I am happy to seek that information. I think it leads to many other things and, when the member for Stuart finishes explaining to me exactly what he is looking for, I will attempt, in the short time that is available to me, to make sure that he has the appropriate answers tonight.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am trying to find the full feasibility study which will have a number of aspects to it. At the financial heart of that will be the cost-benefit analysis which will relate the various costs and benefits in economic terms. Of course, these will be discounted over a period of time to identify the internal rate of return. The other method which could be used involves the discount rate.

I am after this so that I can have a look at the basis for the government's decision to go into the project. I then wish to see how the various changes that have been made so far have affected the internal rates of

return that were proposed originally. For example, we already have a blowout of one third in the capital costs of stage 1A. I want to have a look at the sensitivity testing that was done on those figures by the government to see how they would hold up under different economic circumstances.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I honestly think the member will be whistling for a while. The view of the government has always been that the zone was a project that would create a great many jobs in the Northern Territory and attract industries and manufacturing that were not normally available here. The government's attitude and the original reasons for creating the zone have been discussed at length. As to the supposed budget blowout on stage 1A, I have already spoken about that this evening. I do not consider it to be a major blowout at all.

Mr EDE: It may be that it is not a significant blowout. It will depend on the degree of sensitivity of the total project to the capital costs. In some projects, a cost like that in the early stages would be insignificant. In another type of project, with a different type of cash flow, it would be of major significance. I become very worried when the minister starts to backtrack because I start to wonder whether the government went through this process at all. I would like his assurance that he will provide us with all the information that was put together at the time the government made its decision. We will then be able to assure ourselves that the decision to go ahead was made on the basis of sound economic planning.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I believe that the decision was based on sound economic planning. Tomorrow morning, I will read Hansard and analyse what the member for Stuart has had to say. Where I think it appropriate, I will answer him.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I would like to raise a few additional points. If my first question was covered by the answer that the minister gave this morning, I would be happy to hear that. As the minister is aware, the Industries Assistance Commission report expressed some dismay about the lack of financial projections on the Trade Development Zone. Could the minister advise me whether the Northern Territory government has received any indication from the responsible federal minister of his attitude to the IAC's recommendations in respect of the problems they may cause in the future for the Northern Territory?

Mr HANRAHAN: I am happy for the member for Arafura to see the correspondence that I have sent to Senator Button and Minister Dawkins. The chairman of the zone has already had discussions with the federal government department concerning possible attitudes. In both letters I requested meetings with Senator Button and Minister Dawkins to gauge their views on the recommendations in the IAC report. The letters indicated that it is creating great difficulty for the Territory; it is having an effect on the establishment of the manufacturers in the zone.

Those letters have been in the mail for a week and a half to 2 weeks and, because of the urgency and the importance of the project, I would hope to have a reply in the near future. Mr Chairman, I am happy to keep the Assembly and the Leader of the Opposition informed. He has expressed to me the support of honourable members opposite in my approaches to both Minister Dawkins and Senator Button and I thank them for that.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, on a number of occasions, and on one major occasion in respect of the BTEC program, I have given both written and oral

submissions to the IAC. For the record, can the honourable minister advise me if he received any advice whatever or if he was aware that the recommendations that the IAC has brought down were expected? Did he receive any advice that that would happen?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I did not receive any advice that those recommendations were expected. To clarify the standing of the IAC report at the moment, I might add that actually it is a draft report. Public hearings are to take place in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra at the end of this month. The Territory will appear in Canberra on 30 November and 1 December to make further submissions on the zone, and that formal advice has been communicated to the IAC.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I have a number of specific questions about the firm that appears to be the major prospect. Before I ask those questions, I must say that, underneath all the subtle political language and the euphemisms that have been used - and this is not a criticism of the minister - it appears to be a prospect at least. If the IAC recommendations are proceeded with, as indeed they generally are, then the Trade Development Zone may well remain largely untenanted and would become a rather expensive headache for the Northern Territory.

My question in respect of the major investor, the knitwear firm, is this: does this firm intend to manufacture its garments in the Trade Development Zone from the ground up or will the garments arrive at the Trade Development Zone from overseas in a manufactured state?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I will explain that as best I can. I do not have an exact knowledge of the percentage that will be manufactured from local material and that which will be imported, but it will be in compliance with the regulations set down by the federal government. In some cases, I think this depends on whether the product is aimed at the export market and, in this particular case, a percentage is aimed at the domestic market also. Under the regulations, a certain percentage of the garment is allowed to be imported in a manufactured state. If the garment were a jumper, there might be a requirement to manufacture 2 sleeves in Australia. The raw material can be from overseas or from the domestic market. The product is assembled here and exported. In the case of the knitwear people, manufacture will be in accordance with the guidelines set down by the federal Bureau of Trade.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have 1 more question, and then I want to make some general comments. How many jobs will be available as a result of the 14 firms that have signed up?

Mr HANRAHAN: At the moment, I could give a rough figure but I would prefer to give the exact number. Unfortunately, I do not have the figure with me. We estimate that the total number of jobs created through the zone over the next 5 years will approach 1800. That figure includes a flow-on effect of 1 in 3. However, I would prefer to give the Leader of the Opposition the exact figure on the number of jobs that will be created as a result of 14 firms establishing in the zone. I will provide him with the exact information tomorrow.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I thank the honourable minister for his answers to our questions. They have made the situation somewhat clearer. I must admit that I share some of the concerns of the member for Stuart about the cost-benefit analysis of the project as it has been outlined. I want to spend a little time on Budget Paper No 4 as it relates to the Trade Development Zone.

We find that \$5.6m will be spent this year on capital works. A sum of \$1.594m will be spent on something called 'marketing' and \$3.02m on something called 'miscellaneous receipts'. \$3m of the \$3.02m is, in fact, an investment by the Territory Insurance Office. I understand that that investment has been put into part of the warehouse facility there. What we are looking at this financial year is a sum of \$20 000 that the zone authority will receive from investors in the zone.

Mr Chairman, to me that is a bit frightening. We have heard already tonight that the first and the largest potential investor, the knitwear factory, is due to move in in February, and between February and the end of June next year, the government expects to receive only \$20 000 from that firm. That is the first aspect that concerns me, and I would appreciate the minister's comment on that: the government will receive only \$20 000 from a firm that is to employ 35 people, that is taking up quite a lot of space in the Trade Development Zone and that has cost the taxpayer \$13m so far.

A second and related fact is that we will spend \$1.594m on marketing next year. According to the explanatory note, that has 2 aspects. One is the marketing aspect and, obviously, the benefits arrived at with K.K. Yeung for consultant's fees and associated fees are to be contained in that. The other aspect mentioned in the explanatory note is the provision of allowances to zone operators from November 1986. On the one hand, we are expecting revenue until 30 June next year of \$20 000 and, on the other hand, we are looking at spending \$1.594m to attract people into the zone, and a considerable proportion of that sum - and I am not sure how much, but let us say \$500 000 as a round figure - on the provision of allowances to zone operators.

That is pretty disturbing to me because it means that we have spent \$13m, we will still be paying money even when the people arrive in the zone and we will not be obtaining any return from our investment. That is the general basis of my concern. In all of these things, it is necessary to weigh up the benefit to the taxpayer against the attractions needed to get the people into the zone and to provide employment opportunities. But it is not clear to me that the benefits are there at present, as I have already explained.

I would like an explanation from the minister, if he is able to give it, as to when he would expect those figures to change around. When will we get a reasonable revenue out of the Trade Development Zone? That is a particularly important question because we know that we will not receive any payroll tax or stamp duty from the zone because those charges have been waived. When will the taxpayer in the Northern Territory start to get a direct return for the \$13m that has been spent?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition has found a surprising ally. The Treasurer looks as if he is going to beat me to death as well.

In fact, the receipts are quite true and I am quite happy to have a look at the forecast budgets to show, in actual figure terms, when the reversal and turnaround will occur. The whole zone is structured on the basis of incentives in order to encourage people into it. In all the agreements that we have, those incentives cease within 3 years and that is the point when things will reverse. However, I think the interest of the Leader of the Opposition in the forward strategy has touched on several points that can only be termed 'fluid'. The February move-in date for HKI Industries does not mean that it will be operational at that time. That is when most of its gear will be on its way. It will still need to be assembled.

Mr Chairman, I think the actual figures are important so that the wrong interpretation is not placed upon the government's strategy and, as I said, I am more than happy to show the projections following the expiration of incentives and the actual establishment of the industry within the zone in its own right. Those forecasts are available.

Mr SMITH: How far will the 14 firms go towards filling the existing or planned warehouse space in stage 1A and, if we do attract any more firms, will that involve further capital investment for the provision of more warehouse space?

Mr HANRAHAN: Yes, it will. I explained the strategy that is being developed at the moment with investigations into areas of the zone becoming available for purchase and the future establishment of factory space, not by the government but by private investors. Those sorts of proposals and considerations have been ongoing with the board for 6 months now. Certainly, it is the target at which I am aiming. In fact, I see the government being removed completely from the assets side of the zone at some point. It is my objective to see that private enterprise buys the space and receives an actual return for its investment. That will be possible, with the zone filling up - including the existing warehouse space - when the incentives cease and businesses become operational in their own right. I mentioned earlier that those incentives will not continue ad infinitum.

Appropriation for division 25 agreed to.

Appropriation for divisions 41 and 24 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 60:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, my first question relates to the overall increase from 1985-86 expenditure to this year's appropriation. The appropriation indicates, in nominal terms, an increase of 24% which represents a 15% increase in real terms. I would appreciate some explanation of that.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I thank the honourable member for giving me notice of a series of questions on the housing portfolio. If he refers to Budget Paper No 4, he will see that, in fact, the overall funding has increased by 0.2%. The Housing Commission appropriation for 1986-87 is \$169.4m compared with \$169.1m in 1985-86. In 1985-86, \$20m provided from semi-government borrowings was not included in the appropriation. In 1986-87, the \$81m appropriated to the Housing Commission has utilised Loan Council approved funds so the \$20m was not included in the appropriation. It is only a 0.2% increase; it is not 15% in real terms.

Mr BELL: Is the honourable minister able to explain why it was \$20m in 1985-86 and a nil figure in 1986-87?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, 100% of the Housing Commission appropriation for other than Commonwealth funding is provided through Loan Council funds and the interest rate charged on funds from that source is significantly less. In fact, Loan Council rates are about 4.5% and semi-government borrowing rates are at market price which is considerably higher. We have tried to make full utilisation of Loan Council funds.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I ask the minister to explain for me under which headings the Loan Council funds appear?



Mr HARRIS: There are 2 sets of funding: the Northern Territory Consolidated Fund of \$49.471m and the total Commonwealth funding of \$31.663m.

Mr BELL: Page 3 of Budget Paper No 4 refers to sources of internally-generated funds. I notice an increase of 21% in rents received under the 'general public' heading. Is the minister able to explain how this increase in funds derived from rentals will be raised and how and when it will be applied?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the increase in revenue is due to across-the-board increases of 12% plus a component for additions to our rental housing stock for 1986-87. The honourable member would be aware that a number of houses will be coming on line and there is an increase in rent.

Mr BELL: Can I take it that the number of dwellings that the Housing Commission will be offering for rental in 1986-87 will increase by some 9%?

Mr HARRIS: I do not have the percentage increase but the number is about 840. I will check that for the honourable member.

Mr BELL: I thank the Minister for Housing for his indulgence in that regard. I appreciate that 12% of the increase from \$26.412m to \$32m, as an anticipated internally-generated source of funds, can be explained by rental increases. On the basis that the minister will advise me of the figures at some later date, I am prepared to accept that the 9% increase will be provided by rental revenue derived from new stock provided in 1986-87. However, with the shape of the rental market in Darwin and with the figures being provided for rental accommodation, it is difficult to see that there will be that sort of demand for new accommodation from the commission. I look forward to hearing the minister's actual figures in respect of that additional 9%.

Mr Chairman, page 8 of Budget Paper No 4 refers to other services in the rental activity of the commission. The allocation for 1986-87 comprises \$7.608m which represents 80% of the subvention for that activity. I would appreciate some breakdown of what those other services will be. For example, do they relate to maintenance? What are the 'other services'?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the \$7.6m for 'other services' is made up of \$6m, or 79.5%, which relates to council rates, water and sewerage charges for rental dwellings. The remaining \$1.6m is for specific purpose payments such as mortgage and rent relief.

In Budget Paper No 2 the Commonwealth moneys have been spelt out. That relates to crisis accommodation assistance, mortgage and rent relief schemes, and local government and community housing. They are all spelt out.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I refer to the 'sundry income' heading under 'internally-generated sources of funds'. Sundry income has decreased by 85% from \$1.95 to \$299 000 for 1986-87. What is the explanation for that decrease?

Mr HARRIS: Quite often, the Department of Transport and Works will use the Housing Commission as a construction authority. That arrangement applied to 2 big items last year: the police flats at Berrimah and buildings for the Department of Education. They were big projects. No works of that nature have been identified this year.

Mr BELL: If no works of that nature have been identified for this year, what will the \$299 000 be spent on?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I am only saying that there are no big items. The member spoke of a major decrease and I am saying that no major items are included this year.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I thank the minister for his explanation of that matter.

I turn now to page 6 of Budget Paper No 4 which refers to construction and maintenance activity of the commission. It states that the commission is 'responsible for dwelling construction on behalf of the NT government throughout the Northern Territory including specific provision for Aboriginal and pensioner housing'. Is the minister able to advise the committee of the proportion of the allocation for 1986-87 that has been allocated for Aboriginal and pensioner housing?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, there has been a major increase in the amount to be spent on Aboriginal housing, particularly in the rural areas. Originally, \$9m was allocated, comprising \$4m for rural areas and \$5m for urban areas. The Commonwealth put in another \$2m and the Northern Territory government increased that by a further \$7.4m. As a result, actual expenditure on Aboriginal housing in 1986-87 will be \$18.6m, which is 33% of the total construction budget of \$56.6m. A tremendous emphasis has been placed on Aboriginal housing, particularly in the rural areas. Some \$13.4m is related to Aboriginal housing in rural areas and a further \$5m in the urban areas.

The member's second question related to the provision of pensioner housing. In 1986-87, \$38m is to be spent on general housing and \$4.7m or 12.4% of that has been allocated for pensioner housing.

Appropriation for division 60 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 88:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I wish to raise 3 matters in relation to this division. I refer the minister to page 14 of Budget Paper No 4 which runs through the various community assistance programs. I notice that there has been a drop in real terms and, I should imagine, in cash terms, in the allocation against this subdivision. In real terms, the drop in funding for this activity would be well in excess of 9%. Given the level of public interest and need in this area, I wonder if the minister would care to explain why his department has reduced what has been described anyway as a fairly measly amount. It has dropped by \$16 000 in cash terms but, taking inflation into account, that would represent a drop of more than 9% in real terms.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I think the explanation is there. The grants-in-aid program has been reduced. As we are all well aware, restraints have been imposed right across the board and the government took the decision that there had to be some reductions. I do not think an amount of \$16 000 in a budget of \$6.8m is a great amount.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, \$16 000 is shown in cash terms, but that represents a cut of more than \$600 000 in inflation-adjusted terms. This activity covers 'the delivery of child and family welfare programs throughout the Territory, including substitute care for children, youth services, material assistance, counselling services, support to non-government welfare organisations,

adoption, child protection, crisis intervention, crisis accommodation and a wide range of rehabilitative programs for child offenders'. In those areas, there has been a cut of \$600 000 in real terms. I wonder whether the minister would care to explain his priorities. I appreciate that constraints have been placed upon this budget. However, there has been a very substantial cut in funding of these very necessary programs.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, let me say that I do not accept the figure of \$600 000. The amount is \$16 000. If the member looks at the notes at the bottom of the page, he will see that the Subsidised Accommodation Assistance Package has been increased to \$1.65m. The grants-in-aid program has been reduced, and that was a conscious decision taken by Cabinet. Criteria for indigent burials have been tightened up and funding for child care has been looked at as well. We took a conscious decision to make a reduction in that area.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I do not know why the minister refuses to accept my calculation of some \$600 000: 10% of \$6.8m is about \$680 000. If inflation is calculated at 8% instead of 10%, that represents about \$600 000. Let the minister call it \$500 000 if he wants to. Simply to recognise the effect of inflation, the allocation would have increased by that amount. In fact, it has been cut by \$16 000. Therefore, the allocation standing against that activity has been reduced by 10% or \$600 000.

Appropriation for division 88 agreed to.

Appropriation for divisions 91, 96, 46, 71 and 72 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 83:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I have 1 question. If it comes within the Conservation Commission's allocation, can the minister tell me under what heading the funding is shown for the recently produced video tape on the virtues or otherwise of Kakadu National Park? This is the video tape which the Treasurer intends to take with him on his forthcoming trip to Paris.

Mr MCCARTHY: I can inform the member for Nhulunbuy that that funding does not come within the budget of the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission did not have responsibility for the tape.

Mr LEO: I thank the minister. I wonder if he would be forthcoming enough to tell me exactly who did foot the bill?

Mr MCCARTHY: I suggest that the member refer the question to the Treasurer.

Appropriation for division 83 agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

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

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, one thing the committee stage has shown us today is that some of the statements made in a budget speech are open to interpretation. It has certainly been a useful exercise for me. I have learnt what a balanced budget is all about: it is about writing bigger cheques and incurring larger bills. It has been an eye-opener for me. I must

say also that the most disappointing thing that I found about the entire exercise was that the Minister for Community Development cheerfully recognises that there has been a cut in funding of some \$0.5m, in real terms, for his welfare programs.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I would like to pick up a point that was made during the course of the committee stage in relation to \$800 000 for the Palmerston swimming pool. The opposition members said repeatedly that the appropriation did not appear anywhere. Of course, there are so many things going on out at Palmerston that one could miss that. They will find it in 'other services' on page 16. The explanation reads: 'The increase represents a one-off payment for the development of the Palmerston Recreational Centre'.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 206)

Continued from 28 August 1986.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this is a simple bill and its purpose is to exempt hiring arrangements covering on-site caravans and caravan parks from duty. Clearly, this is a sensible measure. We know that a number of people live in caravan parks on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. The object of this bill is to remove a fee presently imposed through tax and hiring charges under the Taxation Act. The opposition supports the bill.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has described what the bill is about. Basically, it is pretty simple but I would like to express my support for it. Many people in the Northern Territory have lived in virtually permanent caravan accommodation before being able to obtain proper housing. A large number of people actually prefer to live in caravan parks on a permanent basis. Any measure which lowers tax has to be a good thing, and I support this bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

PAY-ROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 207)

Continued from 28 August 1986.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, again this is a simple piece of legislation which the opposition is happy to support. It provides an extension of the present payroll tax exemption to enable it to cover the new Australian Traineeship Scheme which the federal government announced some time ago and is now starting to introduce.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I too support the bill which provides for liability for payroll tax to be waived for people employed under the Australian Traineeship Scheme. Anything which helps young people to get real jobs, gain training and become valuable members of the work force has to

be supported. My only regret is that our payroll tax is not levied until a firm's payroll is in the order of \$300 000. This figure may have been raised lately, but it is so large that it is an advantage only to the larger firms. It would be a marvellous thing if the federal government could organise some incentives for smaller businesses to be able to take on young people for training. A 1-to-1 training scheme, for example, could give some excellent training to young people. If very small businesses were given the incentive to take on young people, it would go a long way towards stopping the drain of dole money. These people would become tax contributors and help to reduce the deficit in this country. Supporting small business offers the greatest chance of lowering the country's deficit and incentives have to be found for that particular area. I support this bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I cannot let this particular amendment pass without expressing my disappointment, as I have on the passage of the last 3 amendments to the Pay-roll Tax Act, that the act has still not been amended to take into account that those who provide food and accommodation for employees are able to do so at a rate which is ridiculously low, and so are able to minimise their payroll tax. Because the total amount is worked out across the spectrum of companies liable for payroll tax, it means that the small businessmen, the people who are not able to provide those sorts of benefits, have to bear a disproportionate tax burden. It is the very large companies which provide accommodation and meals to their employees as a matter of course.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

COAL AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 225)

Continued from 28 August 1986.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, this bill has some curious aspects to it. It has not been introduced to create a heated argument, but to allow us to mine the peat which has been discovered in the Finnis River area. It emerged that there was an anomaly in the act. Peat mining is not an extractive industry and peat is not a mineral. Peat has not been defined as coal and we have no definition to allow us to extract it legally. There is quite a large market for peat and, apparently, we have quite substantial deposits in the Finnis River area.

As the act stands, it would be possible for a person to maintain that he had found a deposit of palladium, silver or even gold underneath the peat and that it was necessary to remove the peat as an overburden. Of course, it would have been processed in some way and it would have escaped the net that we cast. The person would not have found the gold after removal of the overburden, and would have been able to say that an enormous loss had been sustained on the whole project. As a result, as far as mining royalties would be concerned, the whole purpose of the act would have been frustrated. Being Deputy Leader of an extremely responsible opposition, I wish to advise that we support this bill.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, as a result of an approach made to me, I took some interest in this bill. I found out a few interesting things that I did not know before. One of these is that virtually all of the peat used in Australia is imported from Europe, perhaps England or Ireland. That really surprised me because I thought that peat was simply decomposed vegetable matter which would have been found in fairly large quantities just about anywhere there was a swamp of some age or a well-vegetated area that was regularly inundated with fresh water. I thought it was just a matter of digging it up and drying it out in order to produce the type of peat that could be thrown into a plant pot with a bit of fertiliser and a seed. I was wrong. Australia imports nearly all of the peat that is used in the agricultural industry. Consequently, it is relatively expensive. This meant that anyone who could find sizeable quantities of good quality peat in Australia was likely to have a reasonable business proposition.

I investigated the actual nature of peat. The definition of 'peat', which is really what this bill is all about, covers such a broad spectrum of decomposed matter that there are great difficulties in applying any one particular form of words to it. Finding a place for a definition of 'peat' in Northern Territory law has not been easy. The youngest peat, that which has not decomposed for very long, is not a very good product as far as the traditional use of peat for heat generation is concerned. Peat has been used in this way for many centuries in colder climates and that is where it was most valuable. Therefore, often peat is classified by its calorific value or the amount of heat a particular peat is liable to give off. The amount of heat depends on the age of the peat and its particular stage of decomposition. The younger peats do not have a very high calorific value and, in fact, do not burn at all. However, they are quite useful as a compost mix.

The argument put forward by the government in this case is that peat should come under the definition of 'coal'. It is not disputed that peat is the very beginning of the chain that leads to coal, but most references I have found conclude that peat is not coal as such. Coal itself has a very wide spectrum of calorific values and sometimes experts have difficulty in determining what classifications various coals fall under.

Obviously, the government had to find somewhere to place a definition of 'peat' in legislation to enable licences to be granted to persons for its exploitation. The government has chosen to place the definition in the Coal Act so that any person seeking to exploit peat in the Northern Territory will be able to apply for permits and leases and be protected legally.

One matter was not covered in the honourable minister's second-reading speech. I ask the minister to indicate whether the inclusion of peat in the definition of 'coal' in the Coal Act means that the word 'coal' will have a similar definition in the Minerals Act. For the information of honourable members, coal is covered by both the Mineral Royalty Act and the Coal Act. We are amending the Coal Act to include peat under the definition of 'coal' for the purposes of that act. I am unsure whether that will mean that peat will fall under the definition of 'coal' in the Mineral Royalty Act.

I am pleased to see that the minister has circulated an amendment to clarify that petroleum does not come under the definition of 'coal'. I raised this matter with the minister and, in his usual style, he was very cooperative. He agreed that the matter required attention and had an amendment drafted to clarify the situation.

I am sure the community at large will be eternally grateful for this legislation because it is very important that the definition of 'peat' be clarified once and for all so that we can rest assured that disputes between citizens of the Northern Territory will not arise in relation to the ownership of or exploitive rights to peat, where it is found in the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, the Coal Amendment Bill is a response by the government to a most unusual legislative problem which emerges from a question concerning the limit of operation of the Coal Act. The discovery of peat at Bynoe Harbour, and attempts to find the means by which it can be exploited, have revealed a hitherto unsuspected gap in the general framework of the mining legislation. Unfortunately, the question concerning the limits of the operation of the Coal Act has placed the Territory in a situation whereby an emerging industry based on peat may not be able to proceed. The question has been further complicated by a dispute as to the ownership of rights to develop that substance.

The legal advice available to the government is to the effect that peat may not be covered by the Coal Act and, in fact, is not covered by the Mining Act. In addition, the advice suggests that, if peat were not covered by these acts, there would be no legal framework which would allow its exploitation.

In the bill before the Assembly, including the amendment, a solution is sought which does not derogate from the rights of the title holder but seeks to create an environment where the development of peat can proceed to the maximum benefit of the community at large. In seeking to resolve this problem, the government is aware that some people may chose to interpret its actions as favouring one party over another. Therefore, the government has considered most carefully all available options and facts in arriving at this solution.

I am grateful for the attempts of the member for Fannie Bay to see natural justice take its true course and I thank him for his interest in the rather unusual set of circumstances that we found ourselves in as a result of the limitations of the legislation.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

Clause 2:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 88.1.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I wish to raise 2 points. At the risk of being perceived once again by the minister to be anti-mining, I point out that, apart from the Mining Act, I have an interest in the Mineral Royalty Act. The Mineral Royalty Act includes lignite and coal under the definition of 'mineral'. In this act, we have defined 'coal' act to include lignite. I am wondering whether that change in definition will have an effect on the Mineral Royalty Act. We have defined coal here to be many things, including lignite, whereas in the Mineral Royalty Act we define a 'mineral' to include coal and lignite. My first question is whether that will affect our ability to define peat under coal for the purposes of the Mineral Royalty Act.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, my notes on lignite and the Mineral Royalty Act do not answer the query of the member for Stuart. I will obtain the information and advise him later.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I might be able to assist the committee on this matter because I did take a fair bit of interest in it. I have a similar interest to that of the member for Stuart. It appears that, when the department looked at the fact, there was doubt as to whether it could be interpreted that coal included peat under Northern Territory legislation and the same question arose with regard to lignite, bituminous coal and anthracite. There was doubt whether they were covered by any Northern Territory law. As I understand it, when the department decided to include peat under the definition of 'coal', it brought several other products into line at the same time.

The literature on and scientific definitions of 'coal', 'peat' and 'lignite' are quite interesting. They overlap in many ways but there are contrary arguments also. I have even read some court judgments on this matter which were pointed out to me. Over quite a long period of time, there have been court battles, no doubt over disputed claims and so on, elsewhere in the world about the various products. It is an area of considerable confusion. However, that is why lignite is included in the definition here. I appreciate that, at the moment, the minister cannot answer the question I had for him. That is understandable and it should not hold up passage of the bill.

The Mineral Royalty Act covers coal as does the Coal Act. We are extending and clarifying the definition of 'coal' in the Coal Act. My question was: does that automatically extend the definition of 'coal' under the Mineral Royalty Act? Personally, I would assume that it did. The 2 acts have equal status; neither is subordinate legislation. It is completely reasonable to argue that, if one Northern Territory law included peat under the definition of 'coal' then, where coal is the subject of another law of equal status, it has to include peat, lignite and so on. In other words, both acts would cover the same products.

Mr EDE: That is exactly the point I had a problem with. Under the Mineral Royalty Act, 'mineral' is not defined in that way; it says 'coal' and 'lignite'. Because it omits part of what we have defined here as 'coal', it may be that a court would interpret that some other part of the definition of 'coal' could be omitted for the purposes of the Mineral Royalty Act and for other acts in the Territory. I think the honourable minister should obtain a legal opinion on that and see whether it might be necessary to define coal specifically in both the Mining Act and the Mining Royalty Act. At the moment, it is the Mineral Royalty Act that concerns me because it says that 'mineral' covers coal and lignite, and here we say that 'coal' includes lignite. I am sure the minister will take that on board.

My last query concerns sphagnum moss the extraction of which is an industry in Tasmania. It has been the cause of considerable consternation in recent times and was the subject of a major political debate when I was there for our party's federal conference. It also is carboniferous. However, I do not believe that it would be involved in any but the early stages of the formation of peat which the member for Fannie Bay described to us. It is not used as a heat-producing material but it is used in the horticultural industry. It may be that the honourable minister can enlighten us on that product.



Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I take on board the concerns of the members for Stuart and Fannie Bay. I will seek answers to their questions and a legal opinion to ensure that the definition of 'coal' under the Coal Act includes peat. I will check on lignite and sphagnum moss also. When we passed the Coal Act and the Mining Act not so very long ago, we little thought that we would later be debating the complexities of defining coal, peat and sphagnum moss.

Mr Ede: It is a good sign.

Mr COULTER: It is. I take the honourable members' concerns on board and I will obtain a legal opinion as to interpretation and classification under the 2 acts to ensure that there is coverage for the carboniferous materials described here this afternoon.

Amendment agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I wish to address a couple of issues this evening. The first is the use of the emergency telephone number 000. That may sound a banal thing to talk about in an adjournment debate. I touched on it briefly a couple of years ago but now the matter has become a little more urgent.

Most members will understand that the emergency telephone number 000 provides immediate connection to the emergency services of fire, health and police. I have identified a problem over the last couple of years but recently I became aware that it is a bigger problem than I had thought. My research interstate shows that it is a problem not only in the Darwin area but in other places in Australia also. The problem I refer to exists predominantly in high-rise buildings and any building that has a PABX system which requires dialling of the single digit 0 to access a telephone line. In those circumstances, there are very few lines that can be used to dial directly to an outside number through a major PABX system, particularly in multi-storey buildings which usually accommodate large corporations or government operations. Most lines have an STD bar placed on them, particularly after hours.

The problem becomes manifest after dialling 0 to access an outside line. When 000 is then dialled in an attempt to connect with emergency services, the first 0 automatically denies access to the telephone system because of the STD bar and, simultaneously, denies access to the emergency telephone service. This situation has been exacerbated in the last couple of years by the additional services that are being provided by Telecom. Of course, these are services that we enjoy, and I refer particularly to the international

subscriber trunk dialling series in which a double zero connection, 0011, is used to access the ISD connection. That makes the problem even worse because firms usually bar access to international subscriber trunk dialling and there has been a major tightening up in most corporations around Australia for personnel who have direct dial telephones through a PABX to an open line.

The problem has been further exacerbated since the introduction of the satellite services, particularly with some of the networking now taking place among businesses across Australia. The number of users with access to the satellite has increased enormously. The satellite access code is also a 00 code. When major corporations and businesses across Australia prevent access with their STD barring system, a very unsafe situation is created for employees who might need to use the emergency telephone number.

The problem can be solved very simply in one of 2 ways. The 00 system could be dropped and the international emergency telephone number series of 999 substituted or the 111 system could be used. I understand Telecom has already set aside a future use for the 111 series. I have discussed this problem with Telecom several times and I cannot understand why I continue to get the same answer. Telecom's answer is that the 000 series stops crank calls. The argument is that the time delay in dialling 000 tends to deter people from making false calls to the emergency frequency because they either miss a number or get sick and tired of trying to dial 000. Telecom maintains that this cuts down the number of frivolous calls to the emergency services.

I challenge Telecom on that. I think it is arrant nonsense because most new systems do not include dials; modern telephones have touch buttons. It is no more difficult for the user to press 000 than 111. The reaction takes place within the system almost instantaneously. It is about time that Telecom had a serious look at the emergency telephone number 000 and decided to use either the 999 international emergency code series or the 111 series that I believe has been set aside for the purpose.

I would also like to comments this evening in respect of what I call a defence desert storage area. Some of members may have seen these areas on film or on visits to the United States and will be aware that there are large repositories of weaponry, particularly aircraft, which have not necessarily reached the end of their operational life but have been put into temporary storage and are being retained for various reasons, including possible use, by the defence services. Arizona contains one such place which covers an enormous area and is used to store mothballed aircraft.

At first glance, these areas may seem rather strange in Australia. We have such a small number of aircraft and defence weaponry that becomes obsolete. We seem to use our resources interminably until they just about fall out of the sky or are no longer capable of being driven or sailed. However, at the moment, we have 19 trackers sitting at HMAS Albatross which have not been used for about 3 years. We have some 60 to 70 Mirage jets which will be turned out to pasture when the new FA18 fighter comes on line, and we have several A model Hercules, which have not been used for some considerable time, sitting at Laverton RAAF Base.

In past years, the Australian government has tried either to sell such pieces of equipment or to give them away to another nation as some sort of goodwill gesture. The net result of this is that we do not have the use of them as a backup in case we ever need them and yet we get very little money for them. I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that all these aircraft could be placed in a desert storage area along with any other obsolete land-based

weaponry. Such an area could be located in central Australia. An area close to Alice Springs would be ideal. A multiplicity of benefits would be created immediately. In the first place, we would have available a considerable amount of backup weaponry at a time of immediate threat. We would still have previously-trained people who would be capable of using it, and it could be added to our now sadly-depleted defence force weaponry. There would be several other benefits. Most people, regardless of age, seem to have a great interest in military aircraft. The desert storage area could be used as a museum which would become more interesting as the years passed and the weaponry aged.

In America, great use is made of redundant weaponry in films. The aircraft are rented out to the major film corporations at high prices. A considerable amount of money is earned in this way. I can see the day not so very far away when we could have Mirage dogfights above the central desert areas, re-enacting the 6-day war or whatever, and gain considerable revenue at the same time.

Mr Setter: Go to the Middle East and you can see the real thing.

Mr FIRMIN: One can, but it is not very easy to film. It might be possible to film for only a couple of minutes a day and then one might not get it in the can to sell it.

Another spin-off would be future sales. The longer these aircraft and this weaponry is retained, the more it increases in value. This has been demonstrated very clearly in Darwin where one of the few operational Sea Furies in the world today is operated by Guido Zuccoli. That Sea Fury would fetch \$650 000 in its operational state. After allowing for inflation since the time that aircraft was manufactured, it will have almost doubled in value. We have seen the same thing happen with Spitfires and Hurricanes now being sold in Europe. I found out the other day that Guido Zuccoli is presently in California having another aircraft reconstructed and this will probably be a 1-off in the world. It is an Italian World War 2 bomber and, presumably, he will bring it to Australia at some time in the future. I hesitate even to guess how much it will cost to get it operational and bring it to Australia.

This leads me to another related topic which I call my Australian reserve pilots scheme. There is a sad lack of reservists in Australia at the moment. Some areas of the military attract people to go into the reserves, and that is particularly necessary with the Norforce team. It is attractive to people because of the enjoyable nature of the activity. During the last few years, many people have left our defence forces, particularly the air force. It costs millions of dollars to train pilots who, when they finish their time in the air force, do not seek a renewal of their commissions. Those people are lost to the defence forces. Usually, they become involved with civil air services where most of them still fly.

However, just because such people fly in a civil capacity, they do not have to abandon the defence services entirely. For example, if we kept some of our aircraft at a desert storage area, including the 60 to 70 Mirages I mentioned and the millions of dollars worth of stores associated with them, ex-servicemen could be brought to Alice Springs as reservists to practise maintenance of aircraft and engine refitting. Our former service pilots could continue operational flying in the area. Admittedly, the aircraft would come to the end of their useful operational life eventually and would probably be superseded in the back-up service by the FA18s which would then run their

length of time. As additional aircraft were brought into the desert area for storage, any pilots still capable of flying them ought to be able to continue in the reserves to ensure that they could be utilised in our defence forces if needed.

Another thing which relates to the Australian reserve pilots scheme that I have in mind is the peacetime and wartime use of trawlers in Australia. We have an extremely large trawler fleet in the Northern Territory and we pay enormous sums of money from the public purse to private air operators for surveillance. I am not suggesting that we cut back on surveillance enormously, but I am suggesting that we maximise the use of our existing facilities. Our trawlers at sea are our front line of surveillance. Every day they talk to each other and to their home base. They get in touch with the coastal radio stations at Darwin, and they have the opportunity to keep track of what is happening anywhere on the northern coast. They talk to others and they know who is moving within the region. They know if somebody intrudes into the area, and that has been demonstrated time and time again in the past.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the other day I took up a long-standing invitation to visit the Jindalee over-the-horizon radar facility or, to be more correct, the part of it that receives the signal. The station consists, as all radar facilities do, of 2 parts. The transmitter station is at Everard Park in the Harts Range and the receiving station is situated about 20 km along the Yuendumu Road where there is a large aerial array. I was entitled only to an unclassified briefing concerning the base, but I was fascinated by what they do out there. It is a rare example of Australian ingenuity. The hardworking people from the weapons research establishment at Salisbury, who set up this radar station at Jindalee, have solved the vast problems inherent in a series of mirrors, one stacked upon the other, to send a signal out to hit the ionosphere, rebound it to the surface of the Indian Ocean and then to pick up and amplify the weak reflected signal. They do some fascinating things.

Anybody flying into Alice Springs will see the aerial array out to the west of the Stuart Highway. I once mentioned in the Assembly that I was concerned that the array looked very much like an airstrip and that any aircraft in trouble might be tempted to try to land there and be rather horrified at the number of aerals in its way. Some dumbbells are erected, which is the traditional sign of an out-of-service airstrip, but I am always worried that a pilot might not see them before attempting to land an aircraft that has engine trouble.

The people who set up Jindalee are very proud of the work that they have done and I believe that other nations, including our United States allies, would be very pleased to get hold of the computers which have been developed by Australian scientists to analyse the data. From other sources, I have heard that the signals can give information about how fast the wind is blowing in the Indian Ocean and that that information could be used to aid weather forecasting. That is quite an achievement.

I spoke with the manager of AWA, the company which will be converting the work of the scientists into modular form using robust materials able to stand up to the rigours of operational requirements. AWA expects to be employing up to 80 people out there in the next year or 2 as the RAAF takes over. AWA will do the operational work and will have at least 5 highly-trained engineers in the high-technology field, which is a field I have often wished that Australia would become more involved in. He is very keen to get hold of young people

from Alice Springs with an interest in learning high-technology electronics. He explained to me that it is very rare for firms to have any full-time engineers, let alone 5 of them. This is an excellent opportunity for the very highest possible standard of training available anywhere in the world in this particular field to be given to young people from Alice Springs and, I dare say, from the whole Territory if they are keen enough to move down there. I look forward to promoting this opportunity for our young people to get into the high-technology field and receive some excellent training.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to express my concern at the news today that the Under Treasurer, Richard Madden, has been sacked by the Northern Territory government or, more specifically, by the Chief Minister. I find it distressing in the extreme that such a decision has been taken by the government. In my view, it is another illustration of the increased politicisation of the Northern Territory Public Service.

There is no doubt that Richard Madden came to the Northern Territory with a very fine record as a public administrator, has continued that record in the Northern Territory and has been one of the main architects of putting the Northern Territory public accounts on a sound and proper basis. Quite clearly, in doing that he has upset some of the cowboys opposite who ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that unparliamentary reference to members opposite.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I withdraw that remark.

In doing that, quite clearly he has upset some of the members opposite who have the strange belief that the public purse is their purse and that there is no distinction to be drawn between the money it contains and their own. We are all aware of occasions when the Northern Territory government has been thwarted, by the efforts of the Under Treasurer, in its attempts to use the public purse in a way that proper public service procedures do not provide for. It is quite clear that he is paying the price for that. Clearly, he is paying the price for attempting to be an apolitical public servant delivering the best available product that he and his department are able to without the fear of political consequences. Of course, that is most unusual given the increasing politicisation of the Northern Territory Public Service.

There is no doubt that the fine ideals that Richard Madden brought with him to the Northern Territory, from long and distinguished service in New South Wales, did not meet with favour in the Northern Territory. It is clear that he has paid a price for attempting to play the game the way public servants play the game and administer the public service in the rest of Australia. Unfortunately, it is becoming more and more clear that the Northern Territory is different, that the political masters in here demand political responses from their public servants and that, when those public servants refuse to give such political responses, they pay the price.

The official reasons for Dr Madden's sudden departure are unclear. The Chief Minister is reported to have said that Dr Madden had given 'good and loyal service to the Northern Territory'. It would appear that Dr Madden's reward for this good and loyal service is to be removed from the position as the head of Treasury, which is 1 of the 3 most senior position within the Northern Territory Public Service. Despite the fact the Chief Minister no longer wanted him in that position, for whatever reasons - and I think I have outlined those reasons - the Chief Minister expressed his confidence in Dr Madden's professional competence quite clearly by offering him the position

of Chairman of NTEC. It appears that, when faced with that circumstance, Dr Madden had no choice but to refuse. I can thoroughly understand his feelings. For a person who was picked specifically from New South Wales to take up the position of Under Treasurer to be expected to take another position after the distinguished and professional advice that he has given to the Northern Territory Treasury is an insult indeed.

Mr Speaker, we should ask why this step was taken. Is he to be a scapegoat for the government's extraordinary record of financial mismanagement? Is he yet another senior public servant paying the price for this government's global incapacity to manage the economy? Is it that any Under Treasurer who tries to bring a modicum of sanity to bear on the government's financial dealings is doomed to failure?

Dr Madden has only 1 consolation in this matter: his forced departure by the CLP government will not in any way diminish his reputation or standing elsewhere in Australia. In fact, his forced departure may well enhance his reputation in public services elsewhere in Australia as he joins quite a distinguished line of public servants who have been forced out by the political nature of the public service in the Northern Territory.

Has Dr Madden been made the scapegoat for the Skywest fiasco which we are not allowed to mention in this Assembly? Is he to become the scapegoat for other things that have gone wrong with the government's financial performance over the last months and even years? I would say that the answer is yes. The government has come undone financially. \$27m has been wasted on contingent liabilities. That situation has been forced upon us by the government's political handling of this economy. Obviously, that is becoming an embarrassment. We have severe doubts about other major government activities and some were raised tonight in the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill. It is clear that the government is using Dr Madden as a scapegoat for many of its financial failings and, by doing so, is attempting to avoid taking the blame that truly lies with it.

Mr Speaker, as a result of the sacking of Dr Madden, a wider issue that will be of concern is morale within the public service. There is no doubt that he is highly respected within the public service for his abilities, particularly within the lower, less-politicised elements. There is no doubt that the public service will see his sacking as evidence of further politicisation within it and public servants will be asking who will be next. That is a very good question. Who will be next? Obviously, there are a number of quite prominent people still within the public service who are prepared to act independently and in the way that they think professional public servants should act. They must be lying awake at night worrying about their future in the public service because of the actions taken today by this government against Dr Madden.

Mr Perron: What a load of rubbish!

Mr Finch: You are totally irresponsible.

Mr SMITH: You will get your chance in a minute. It is your government that is totally irresponsible.

We cannot afford to lose high-calibre public servants like the one we have lost today, one of many whom we have lost over the preceding years because of the heavy-handedness of this government and because of its inability to recognise the necessity for an apolitical public service that is allowed to do

its job within the confines and constraints that the public services in the rest of Australia expect to operate under.

The problem in the Northern Territory is that the public service has been politicised and we are all paying a price because, when we reach a stage where public servants will not speak up because they know they will get the chop, that is when the quality of the advice that is received by the government suffers. There is no doubt that that is happening in the Northern Territory at present. There are Australian Labor Party public servants who are sufficiently worried about the politicisation of the public service not to wish to be very public about their Labor Party membership. We have other Labor Party members who are deterred from standing for preselection because they know they will pay a price within the public service if they do so.

Mr Perron: That's nonsense and you know it.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, some public servant members of the Labor Party who expressed interest in preselection have been threatened by other public servants. I have been caught unawares by this debate otherwise I would have been prepared to give some names. I will not give names without the permission of the public servants concerned because that would just add to their fears about the way they will be treated. However, I can tell members that there are public servants, who are Labor Party members or Labor Party sympathisers, who have been threatened that, if they undertake more active involvement in the Labor Party or stand for Labor Party preselection, they will suffer within the public service.

Mr Perron: Threatened by whom?

Mr SMITH: Threatened by their immediate superiors and sometimes their higher superiors.

Mr Speaker, the other element that is fascinating is that what we have seen today is the start of the removal of Tuxworth supporters in the public service. It will be a very fascinating exercise indeed to see that flow through. That adds another political element to the whole question. Internal CLP fighting over who rules the roost and who will be king of the pile for today is influencing the way that the public service operates and who is placed in the positions of responsibility within the Northern Territory Public Service. The whole thing is an absolute disgrace. We have a situation where, over the last 8 years, the CLP has consciously set out to politicise the public service, to put in top positions people who will follow the political directions of the government and people who do not have the freedom or the flexibility to carry out public service duties as public service duties are expected to be carried out in the rest of Australia. This is a sad day for the Northern Territory Public Service.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise very sadly to add a little to what the Leader of the Opposition has stated. I believe that the removal, if you like, of Dr Madden is a continuation of the policy of a previous Chief Minister who apparently believed that the head of a public service department was in a corporate position. That is a concept which is completely at odds with the philosophy embodied in the basic theory of a responsible bureaucracy under a responsible government, which is the Westminster system that we follow. The government has shown that it is determined to maintain its moves to politicise the public service though I had hoped that, after a sufficient time had passed, we would be able to request the government to move amendments to the ignominious amendments to the Public Service Act which were forced

through this Assembly on that terrible night, and possibly return to the system of government which other people in Australia enjoy. By that means, we would have found ourselves once more aligned with the system of government which has worked so well for so many parliaments over so many years.

Mr Speaker, there is another matter which I wish to raise. It relates to that old kicking horse, the ABC. The point that I am making tonight was enhanced by the announcement today that the ABC will not broadcast the test cricket. That is a departure from a very long tradition and dates back to the time before we had television. The ABC was always the broadcaster of the test cricket, especially the tests between Australia and England. Mr Speaker, this is a subject dear to your heart and I would like to congratulate you on the efforts that you have made over the years to try to obtain the broadcast of quality sporting programs by the ABC. It is a matter that I have taken up on an almost public level with telegrams, telexes and letters to my colleague, Mr Duffy, in the federal parliament.

I have a letter which, unfortunately, does not comply with the requirements for presentation as a petition. I would like to read it out and I ask leave of the Assembly to table it. It is from the Lajamanu community. It states:

We, the undersigned, would like to protest at the quality of the ABC television broadcast as received by this community. We are an isolated community, with little in the way of entertainment, yet we have to endure repeat after repeat after repeat, seemingly an endless number of repeats. We feel the weekend broadcast, especially Sunday, needs attention. As it stands, the programmers should be made to hand their salary back. We feel that it should be compulsory for the ABC to have access to major sporting events such as VFL Grand Final, overseas cricket tests, 1-day cricket matches against international sides, World Cup hockey, motor racing, ie Bathurst, Grand Prix, Wimbledon. Given that there is no commercial broadcast in this area, we find it pathetic that all we get is repeats when there are so many major events occurring and we, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The petition is signed by most of the holders of television sets in Lajamanu. I think it is interesting that that letter did not include cricket tests played in Australia. The very fact that they left that out was an indication of their belief that no way in the world would the ABC not broadcast a test in Australia. They did not mention golf at all and I think that is quite incredible.

I support their concern. We have the great tradition of test matches between Australia and England yet we will not be able to watch those matches in the Northern Territory. People in Darwin have many other things to occupy their leisure hours, such as going to the races or the beach or even watching another channel. People in isolated communities like Lajamanu do not have such options. It has become something of a time-honoured tradition in some of these places for a few people to get together on a Sunday to watch whatever sporting event is on the television if there is something of some importance. Golf is not something that people in Lajamanu really relate to. The greens are too sandy, the fairways are too bushy, and the tees - I will not even mention the tees because it might invite a response from the Minister for Education who has been worrying about TEAS recently.

I tabled this petition from the Lajamanu community because I think that it contributes to the great democratic tradition that has been alive in this



Assembly and elsewhere for a long time. The community is making its concerns known to this Assembly and I know, Mr Speaker, that you will join with me in communicating our concern that the ABC is not maintaining its great tradition of giving us the best coverage possible of the test series between Australia and England. We know that it will not be another tied test and that we will have a great victory in the Ashes series. We think that people at Lajamanu, as much as people elsewhere in Australia, should be able to delight in that and enjoy it as it happens.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I am also a supporter of cricket and I was very pleased to note that, while the member for Stuart was speaking, you had already penned a telegram to Mr Hill of the ABC complaining about the fact that we were not receiving the cricket. I am quite sure that we will have the second test on the television. I am wrong? My apologies, Mr Speaker. Perhaps the member for Stuart will be able to contact his good friend Mr Hill whom he mentioned earlier today. I am sure he has person-to-person contact with Mr Hill and will have the matter fixed in no time at all.

I want to turn to a serious matter this evening and to end the Gilbert and Sullivan opera that we have just heard. This matter is dear to all of our hearts. I am talking about the Territory Tidy Towns presentations that took place last night at the Beaufort Hotel. Most of us were among the 250 to 300 people representing 75 towns throughout the Northern Territory. Territory Tidy Towns and KAB make a tremendous contribution towards developing a community spirit throughout the Northern Territory. In the 6 or 8 years that the competition has been in operation, we have seen the number of towns participating grow from 20 or 30 to the figure I mentioned a moment ago. Through their activities, they have developed tremendous community pride not only in the major centres but also out in all the remote communities, cattle stations, Aboriginal settlements and so on. Indeed, it was with some pride that I noted a number of Aboriginal communities win prizes last evening. I am quite sure that those people who returned to their communities today are singing the praises of Territory Tidy Towns and are all fired up to participate again next year.

One of the reasons I rise this evening to talk about Territory Tidy Towns is to advise the Assembly, also with some pride, that the suburbs of Jingili and Moil in the Jingili electorate won second prize in category C. We were only pipped at the post by Batchelor and Sadadeen. I would like to point out that they have had their last moments of glory in the Territory Tidy Towns competition because next year the Jingili electorate will be right up there taking off the No 1 prize.

Mr Poole: Araluen.

Mr SETTER: I do not think so. Next year it will definitely be Jingili. Until last year, the Jingili electorate had not won a prize in the competition. Last year, we achieved a special achievement award and this year we won second prize.

Mr Finch: What marvellous constituents you must have in your electorate!

Mr SETTER: We have indeed! There are some really fine people in the Jingili electorate. I would like to pay tribute to my Territory Tidy Towns Committee because it is representative not only of interested citizens, but the Girl Guides - a group dear to the member for Wagaman's heart - 2 primary schools, and the Lionesses, another group with which I am sure the member for Wagaman is closely associated.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! When the member for Wagaman and the member for Jingili have finished their cross-Chamber chatter, I would ask the honourable member to address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr SETTER: My apologies, Mr Speaker.

We have a very active Territory Tidy Towns committee operating in the electorate of Jingili. It has undertaken quite a number of projects in the last 2 years. For example, trees have been planted along nature strips in 8 or 10 streets in Jingili and Moil, and in Wilson, Thornton, Varney and Borella Parks. Next weekend, we will plant trees in Butters and Linde Parks, and on an area behind the Jingili ...

Mr Finch: What about Pott Street?

Mr SETTER: Well, I have a problem with Pott Street. Certain people happen to live in Pott Street with whom I have a deal of trouble from time to time. I don't think that they really deserve special attention at this time. Nevertheless, I am quite sure that we will get around to Pott Street eventually. However, a fair amount of work has been undertaken in the electorate.

I would like to say also how pleased I am with the cooperation of the Darwin City Council. It has installed in-ground sprinklers in Wilson and Borella Parks, raised post-rail fences around the Moil Park Oval, top-dressed and seeded that whole area and planted extra trees. I have been led to believe that the council will spend \$5500 on Greenwood Park within the next couple of months, installing in-ground sprinklers, rail fences and playground equipment. Perhaps I will be able to encourage the council to spend money in Wagaman in the near future. I will use my good graces towards that end.

Other exciting things have been happening in the Jingili Water Gardens, adjacent to Rapid Creek. Members will notice that I call them the 'Jingili Water Gardens'. We are in the process of installing \$20 000 worth of playground equipment comprising 2 separate units. We have been able to do that through the good graces of the Department of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs, which provided the funding, and the Department of Transport and Works which is at work at the moment carrying out the actual installation. I am quite sure that the children of residents of the northern suburbs who frequent that park will be very pleased to play on that equipment in the very near future. I hasten to add that that particular park comes under the control of the Department of Transport and Works. It is not a Darwin City Council park although I understand that, for some years, the department has been trying to convince the Darwin City Council that it should take it over. However, the council will not have any part of it.

Mr Speaker, I can assure you that the Territory Tidy Towns Committee in Jingili is strong, well and growing. I am very confident that we will be right up there with the first prize in category C next year.

Mr HANRAHAN (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few comments about a dilemma that I have. It relates to your support for a protest to the ABC about its decision not to televise the test cricket. It strikes me that we should consider ourselves rather fortunate that the ABC has made this decision. I am a great lover of golf and a great fan of cricket and I certainly would not like to be seen to be opposing the televising of the Pope's visit to Alice Springs because of the publicity that Alice Springs and central Australia will receive through it, not only in the rest of Australia

but in the world. In addition to that, I feel for all the schoolchildren who look forward to their normal school programs. When we consider those 4 classifications, I think we should consider ourselves rather fortunate that the ABC has taken a position of balance. It is accommodating the cricketers, the golfers, the Roman Catholics and all other Christians, and the schoolchildren. I commend the actions of the ABC.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITIONS  
Palmerston Swimming Pool

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 1315 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to the building of a public swimming pool in Palmerston. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth that the Northern Territory government honour the promise given by Mr Coulter that a public swimming pool will be built in Palmerston by March 1987. Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that the Assembly will authorise the building of the public swimming pool at Palmerston, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Smoking in the Work Place

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 234 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to smoking in the work place. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain citizens of the Northern Territory, being employees of the Northern Territory Public Service, respectfully sheweth that there is a need to introduce legislation for the provision of a non-smoking environment to safeguard against the deleterious effects of passive smoking to health. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly give due consideration to the enactment of the Northern Territory Public Service Commissioner's memorandum, 'Smoking in the Work Place', and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE  
Funding of Local and Community Government

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the honourable member for Nhulunbuy:

Dear Mr Speaker,

I propose, under standing order 94, that the Assembly discuss this morning, as a matter of definite public importance, the failure of the government to establish rational means of distributing funds to local and community government organisations.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the matter of public importance I raise today is the treatment of local governments by the Northern Territory government in respect of financial matters. I use the term 'local government' in the generic sense as applying to councils of municipalities established under part II of the Local Government Act and the community government councils established under part VIII of that act.

There are 2 issues of particular concern to me in the financial relationship between local governments in the Territory and the Northern Territory government. One issue is the amount of money flowing from the Northern Territory government to local governments and the second issue is the manner and timing of the distribution of such funds to local government bodies. In his budget speech, the Treasurer stated:

The government has decided that local governments must share in the same tight circumstances as have been imposed on the Northern Territory government and take a cut in funds.

It is worth noting that, to use the Treasurer's words, local governments 'must share' in budgetary cuts. How did the government arrange to share its financial circumstances with local governments? Once again, from the Treasurer's own budget speech, the facts are revealing. To quote him again on funding to local governments: 'We have reduced funding by \$700 000 compared to 1985-86'.

It should be noted that, when dealing with the Northern Territory government's funds to local governments, the message is couched in dollar terms. The funding amount is couched in terms that ignore inflation so that the real effect of the resource cut is partially disguised. This technique of disguising reduced resource allocations by pretending that inflation does not exist is not due to any ignorance on the Treasurer's part. In the very same budget speech, he stated that the Territory 'received only a 3% increase in money terms, which is a 5% reduction in real terms'.

The Treasurer is significantly aware of the difference between a money increase and a real increase when describing Commonwealth payments to the Territory. However, when it comes to describing Territory payments to local governments, he conveniently forgets all about the effects of inflation. Let us see how the funding allocations compare when put on the same basis. According to the Treasurer, Commonwealth funds to the Territory rose by only 3% in dollar terms which is a fall of 5% in real terms. Funds flowing via the Northern Territory government to local government fell by 3% in dollar terms which is over 10% in real terms.

The Treasurer, who decided that local government had to share the same tight circumstances as the Northern Territory government, seems to have some difficulty understanding what 'sharing' means. The Treasurer's version of sharing the budgetary situation with local governments means that when Commonwealth funding to the Territory goes up by 3% in dollar terms, Territory funding to local government goes down by 3% in dollar terms. To put the Treasurer's idea of sharing another way, the reduction in funding to local governments is twice the size of the reduction in funding to the Territory when inflation is taken into account.

What sort of sharing is that? What excuse does the government offer for adopting this '2 for me and 1 for you' attitude towards sharing? The explanation is contained in some very revealing statements in the Treasurer's budget speech. To use his own words: 'Furthermore, municipal councils have

far greater control over the bulk of their revenue sources than does the government, and can therefore compensate for the reduced budget allocation by increased rates and charges if they feel expenditure cannot be curtailed'.

The government's official prescription for a local government to cope with the budget situation is for it to either reduce or curtail expenditure, to reduce services or increase charges. Of course that is not what the government would want the public to believe if the Treasurer's statements on Talkback are to be taken seriously. In that forum, he said there was no need for councils to increase rates. I might add that he did not mention that, as a consequence of that, there might be a need for councils to reduce services.

What of the government's own response to sharing the tight budget situation? Once again, I will use the Treasurer's own words from his budget speech. Describing the Territory government's reaction to receiving a 3% increase and passing on a 3% cut, he said: 'To make things worse, the Territory receives a higher proportion of its funds from the Commonwealth than the states'. What convoluted logic! The Territory government shares with local governments by giving them a cut after it has received an increase, and argues that it makes things worse for the Territory that the Commonwealth gives it a higher proportion of revenue than the states.

The Treasurer's budget speech is indeed an eye-opener for local governments. The logic that flows through the budget speech quite frankly has local government officials wondering what they can rely on. Is the Treasurer implying that it would make things better if the Commonwealth gave us proportionally less revenue than the states? That is what his budget speech implies. I can only hope that the Treasurer does not make that observation too loudly because I am sure that there would be a number of state Treasurers, and indeed the Commonwealth Treasurer, who would gladly take him up on it. Commonwealth Treasurers of any political persuasion would be happy to solve our Treasurer's problem if he keeps insisting that it bothers him.

The Treasurer stated in his budget speech that the Territory government is the only state-like jurisdiction to provide general top-up assistance to local governments. That is so, and it is so because local government councils suffer similar financial disabilities to those faced by the Territory government. When the Grants Commission assesses the Northern Territory's financial position, it takes into account such factors as diseconomies of scale. These include the age and sex composition of the population, the social composition of the population, the physical and economic environment, and isolation. In other words, it takes into account the general factors relating to life in the Northern Territory. The combined effect of these factors results in a situation where the per capita payment by the Commonwealth to the Territory is higher than to the states. That higher payment is in recognition of the disability that the Territory faces in providing services such as education, health, water and sewerage at standards comparable with other places in Australia. The factors applying to Territory government costs in providing services also apply to local government. Territory payments to local governments to compensate for their cost disabilities are analogous to Commonwealth payments to the Territory government to compensate for its cost disabilities. One is related to the other.

I stated at the beginning of my speech that it was not only the amount of funds going to local government that concerned me, but also the manner of their distribution. I have demonstrated clearly that, when the NT government talks about sharing with local government, it certainly does not mean sharing

in any fair or equitable manner. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, if the amount of funds flowing from the Northern Territory government to local governments is unfair, then the timing and distribution of those funds is plain lunacy.

Earlier this year, this Assembly passed a bill to establish a Local Government Grants Commission. The function of that body is to make recommendations to the minister in respect of the amounts of money to be allocated to local government bodies from the money provided to the Territory under the Commonwealth Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act. Until such time as the minister tables the report of the Grants Commission, we will not be in any position to comment on the actual distribution of funds recommended for this year. However, we can comment on the timing of the report.

The legislation passed earlier this year states that 'the commission shall, as soon as practicable after 31 August but not later than 30 September in each year, forward to the minister a report on the activities of the commission during the year ended on that first-mentioned date'. On receipt of a report, the minister may accept its recommendations or return it to the Grants Commission for further consideration. The legislation provides for the minister to table the report within 6 sitting days of this Assembly after either having accepted the initial report or receiving a further report subsequent to having requested reconsideration. Assuming that the minister receives a report containing recommendations which are acceptable to him, and does not require any reconsideration, the legislation unfortunately provides for that report to be received up to 30 September.

However, that timing provision in the Local Government Grants Commission Act conflicts with the timing provision in the Local Government Act. In relation to councils of municipalities, section 150 deals with preparation of estimates of income and expenditure. That section provides for the estimates of income and the expenditure which constitute the council's budget to be published before the declaration of the rate. Under section 111, the rate has to be declared not less than 10 days after the estimates, but before 30 September. The legislation provides a safety clause by allowing the minister to vary the date. However, the intention of aiming for the rates to be declared by 30 September is clear. It also makes sense for the rates to be declared as early in the financial year as possible so that, if any increase is needed, it can be kept as low as possible. Obviously, the later in a financial year a rate is increased, the larger it has to be in percentage terms because it will operate only for the remainder of that financial year.

We have a situation where rates are to be declared before 30 September, but not less than 10 days after the preparation of the estimates. This means the budget estimates should be prepared by 20 September at least; that is, councils of municipalities should formulate their budgets, their income and expenditure estimates, 10 days before the Northern Territory Grants Commission is even required to report. The councils of Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Litchfield are all required, under Northern Territory legislation, to formulate their budgets before the body recommending the level of funding assistance to them is required to report to the minister.

In a nutshell, the councils of municipalities have to plan their financial strategies for the year without knowing how much money they are to receive from the Northern Territory government. For some of the councils, NT government funding can amount to half their income. That is a not an insignificant proportion of their budget. Yet Northern Territory legislative constraints are such that councils formulate their budgets without knowing

exactly what support they are to receive from the Northern Territory government. This has to be the height of absolute lunacy: an imposed system of planning in the dark; budget planning in contrived ignorance.

The government's policy prescription for local government is enunciated in the 1985 report of the Local Government Grants Committee. One of the statements contained therein is the following: 'Councils should continue to undertake the effective planning and implementation of their own expenditure programs for both capital and recurrent purposes'. What sort of effective planning for expenditure programs can take place in the absence of information as to the basic source of income, that significant proportion of funding - the Northern Territory government's contribution to local governments. This year, the letter from the minister to the municipal councils advising them of the amount they were to receive was dated 6 November. That is to say, 6 weeks after 20 September, when councils were supposed to have their budgets prepared, the NT government advised them of the support they could expect to receive from it.

This treatment of municipal councils by the Northern Territory government contrasts dramatically with the treatment of state and territory governments by the Commonwealth. Commonwealth governments recognise the need for state and territory governments to plan their budgets. The Premiers Conference serves to establish the global level of support a state can expect from the August Commonwealth budget. In the Territory, the week or so between the presentation of the Commonwealth budget and the realisation of the Territory budget is used merely for finetuning a budget strategy previously well prepared - or presumably well prepared - on the basis that the Northern Territory government knows from the Premiers Conference how much it is likely to receive from the Commonwealth. In contrast, the Northern Territory government does not provide local government with advance information as to the level of support that municipal councils can expect.

The difficult planning and budgetary position in which this government has placed local governments needs to be redressed. Councils need to be given adequate and timely information on which to base the year's financial plans. I would like to ask the honourable minister how many community councils or local governments complied with the statutory requirement to have their budget estimates completed by 30 September and forwarded to him? I would ask him how many complied, because I cannot see how any of them could have complied.

Councils need to be given adequate and timely information on which to base the year's financial plans. The current financial interaction between the Northern Territory government and local governments is structured so as to virtually preclude efficient and effective financial planning by local governments. Solutions to this problem exist; all it needs is for the Northern Territory government to care sufficiently about effective financial management by councils and remove the impediments that it has created.

The Leader of the Opposition will deal with the resolution of this difficulty when he speaks on this matter of public importance. I would hope that, in the very near future, councils will be able to take some heart from this debate because, optimistically, it will mean that the minister and his government colleagues will review the present legislative requirements or the means by which information is conveyed to local and community governments on their funding prospects for each financial year.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, when I first received notice of this MPI, I thought it would be a curly one, but the amended version



indicates that it is another effort by the opposition to waste the time of this Assembly. I concede that the major part of the written address that the member for Nhulunbuy read to the Assembly has some credence. It is acknowledged that there were difficulties in getting the Grants Commission around the 56 communities and in distributing the funds to the councils as quickly as possible. It is amazing that the members of this opposition have approached one of the most innovative systems in the management of Aboriginal affairs, particularly as outlined in part VIII of the act, in an effort to find something negative. I would like to go through some history in a moment to re-educate the opposition about the difficulties we have been through in putting the new Grants Commission in place and distributing the funds for this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, packages are negotiated with all of the new councils to establish appropriate financial infrastructure. Of course, the ongoing funding comes through municipal councils. In the past, they have not been able to fund themselves by their own revenue-raising capacity. The Northern Territory has provided an operational subsidy and, since 1981, has had a Local Government Grants Committee to recommend on distribution of this money and the former Commonwealth PITS funds. Community government councils were funded by the provision of town management and public utilities funding in the same general way as were Aboriginal communities.

We then had the Self Inquiry. The Commonwealth established an Australia-wide review of funding to local government, chaired by Professor Peter Self. This inquiry reported to the Commonwealth government in October 1985. The Commonwealth response, after consultation with states and territories, was to replace the PITS act with the Commonwealth Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act. This act provides that a statutory grants commission must be established in order for a state or territory to receive funds, that a methodology for distribution must be agreed between the Commonwealth and Territory ministers, and that community government councils and other bodies which are declared to be local governing bodies may receive funds.

On 24 June 1986, the Commonwealth passed the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act. On 30 June 1986, the Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission Act was assented to. The newly-formed Grants Commission commenced hearings on 21 July 1986. The agreed list of other local governing bodies was gazetted on 22 August 1986. This agreement was reached between myself and Hon Tom Uren on the basis of categories for declaration. The company-controlled town of Nhulunbuy did not fit into a category.

A methodology had to be arrived at. Grants are being distributed this year on the basis of a methodology agreed, as required, between myself and Hon Tom Uren. The Grants Commission reported on 19 September and the Commonwealth minister advised his agreement on 5 November. One day after that letter, I wrote to all the community councils: one day. That is how much time this government wasted in getting this very recent act, this innovation in Aboriginal affairs and management of local government, into place. Yet the opposition members dig it up as a matter of public importance. They never cease to amaze me. As an opposition, they do not even stand up.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want this Assembly to understand that I personally telephoned each of the mayors and the Lord Mayor of Darwin to tell them of their council funding the moment I received information from Hon Tom Uren that he had agreed with the Grants Commission report. All 56 councils and local governing bodies have been advised of their allocation for 1986-87. All

councils were given the opportunity to present their case to the commission and 54 took the opportunity. It may be of interest to members opposite that not 1 phone call or letter of complaint has been received from municipal councils, local governing bodies or community government councils. The only complaint has been from opposition members and, Mr Deputy Speaker, let us be quite clear about why we have received that complaint. It is because they are too far behind what is going on in the Northern Territory. They are too far behind what is happening in Aboriginal communities. The member for Arafura, who represents one of those communities, comes in here for 5 or 10 minutes every day. During debate on this matter of public importance, he has called in to pick up a few of his wares and is now leaving again. No wonder he is no longer Leader of the Opposition. I have no doubt that Senator Robertson will get the nod over him, if only on the basis of efficient performance in public life - and that is saying something.

The methodology used this year is set out in the full 1986 report of the Grants Commission which I intend to table during these sittings. The methodology is being refined, in cooperation with Commonwealth officers from the Office of Local Government and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, at this very moment. The Territory has achieved major successes in the acceptance of community government councils as legitimate local governing bodies, the acceptance of many association councils for the same purpose, and the establishment of a basic methodology for distribution on a rational and agreed basis. I have examined the method of operation of the commission personally on a trip through many areas which it visited where it received praise for its activities. I assure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been to far more communities, in the last 3 or 4 months whilst this process has been taking place, than any member of the opposition. In fact, I would suggest more than the entire opposition combined.

Members of the opposition have been briefed on no less than 2 occasions on the basis of the Grants Commission and the Local Government Act and, on completion of each of those briefings, they stated that they were completely satisfied with the way we were going about things. Establishment packages are being discussed. They are necessary to allow establishment of viable local government authorities where there were none. They have been negotiated over a period of time with the new councils. Palmerston and Litchfield are under negotiation right now. To encourage the establishment of local government, attractive establishment packages are necessary. It has also been necessary in this context to introduce a special rating ceiling for the Litchfield Shire Council. We have taken every step to assist in the process through the new Grants Commission distributions.

In relation to minor communities, of which there are approximately 400, funding continues to be provided to those Aboriginal communities, including outstations or homeland centres which are not included on the approved list of local governing bodies within the agreed categories. Facilities exist within categories to enable communities to be declared, on the basis of objective criteria, as local governing bodies. Northern Territory government policy quite categorically is that NT Grants Commission funding is not available to outstations until they are large enough and competent - which means that there must be about 100 people. Funding is then at ministerial discretion by agreement with the Commonwealth. I stress that agreement with the Commonwealth is necessary. We have worked very closely with the federal minister in putting all of this together. It took until 5 November for him to agree with the Northern Territory Grants Commission report.

The opposition is probably right on 2 points. The first is that there have been some difficulties in putting this remarkable piece of legislation in place. It is an historic piece of legislation because it is the first time the Northern Territory has been considered equal to the states on financial grounds. Members opposite would not be aware of those significant factors because they are too busy groping around in the gutter trying to find some negative aspect of what is occurring in the Northern Territory. This is the most progressive legislation that has ever been enacted in relation to Aboriginal affairs in Australia. They do not believe it but some of their cronies like Hon Tom Uren, Hon Clyde Holding and the minister from Western Australia all agree that it is innovative. At the Local Government Ministers Council meeting recently in Adelaide, ministers were looking at the Northern Territory act as a model for revamping their legislation.

In the far distant future, this opposition may well get to square 1 in so far as recognising what is occurring in this Northern Territory is concerned. The Aboriginal communities that they are supposed to represent are fully aware of what is occurring through the Local Government Act. They are trying to educate themselves in the workings of this act because they know the benefits it will provide for them. It is providing self-motivation, self-management and self-esteem for the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. Members opposite want to keep Aboriginals down so they can continue to walk through the communities, put their arms around their brothers and patronise them in the way they have done for more than 80 years. It is not on any longer. What a pathetic effort we have had from them this morning! They are trying to change this act so that they can go out amongst the communities and put forward some new concept that they have dreamt up. It is too late because the bird has flown. The Aboriginal communities are aware of the worth of this act and of the Grants Commission. The Grants Commission will certainly be far more efficient in its efforts next year because we will not have a limited time to move around the 56 communities and I am sure Hon Tom Uren will not take until 5 November to approve the report.

The other fact which the opposition touched upon is that we have had enormous cuts to Northern Territory funding this year from the federal government. The one word that the opposition spokesman omitted when he talked about fund raising was 'efficiency'. Efficiency in the provision of services is the thrust of our policy this year. We are using this legislation to bring people in the communities to an understanding of what it is all about. There have already been remarkable savings in the provision of essential services.

Mr Ede: And remarkable cuts.

Mr DALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the cuts are there. The 56 smaller communities in the Northern Territory, some of them not necessarily Aboriginal communities, must be efficient in providing essential services within their communities. The opposition's only participation in this whole system at the moment is its negative attitude. As I have said before, members opposite want to keep the Aboriginal people down where they can manipulate them so they can roam through their electorates making out that they are the good fellows. Sorry fellas, it is all over. Once again, this is a pathetic effort by the opposition to try to win some points but it has succeeded only in losing some.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the opposition came to this debate via the Northern Territory Local Government Conference in Katherine. I can now understand the unfavourable reports I heard there about the performance of the Minister for Community Development. If he performed like that at Katherine, in front of his former colleagues in the local government

sector, he would have received a hostile reception and certainly made no friends and won a few new enemies - not that he is short of those.

Our case in this debate is based on 2 essential points. One is that the local government sector has been asked by the Northern Territory government to take more than its fair share of the cuts that the Northern Territory government has been forced to make. Those cuts have resulted in the local government sector receiving less money than it did in the previous financial year, with that reduced amount having to be spread amongst a greater number of councils than previously because of the expansion in the community government area. We did not receive a response from the Chief Minister on that particular subject and we did not obtain any rationale from the minister as to why local government had been singled out to take an undue share of the economic restraint which the Northern Territory government thinks is necessary.

The second point that we were making in this debate is that some of the very procedures that have been adopted by the Northern Territory government in allocating money to local governments make it very difficult for local governments indeed. We accept that there have been some problems in this initial year and I accept the rationale provided by the minister as to why it took until 6 November for councils to receive their funding allocations. However, the problem is more fundamental than that. Under the legislation establishing the Grants Commission, the commission cannot report before 31 August and has to report before 30 September. The problem is that the government is forced into a position where it has to make decisions on the extent of local government funding to meet its budget requirements before it has the Grants Commission report available in early September. We all know that the Northern Territory government's budget comes down on the third Tuesday in August.

As well as that, there are other requirements of the Local Government Act which require local governments to meet definite guidelines. For example, they have to establish their rates by a certain date and they have to conduct regular quarterly reviews. The point we are making is that practice is revealing that there is a significant weakness in the legislation and the government needs to address it.

I cannot put it any clearer than to draw an analogy with dealings between the Commonwealth and the Territory. If the Commonwealth government said to the Northern Territory government, 'Sorry fellows, we cannot tell you how much money you have until 3 or 4 weeks after we have passed our budget', there would be hell to pay here. The Northern Territory government would quite legitimately say that that was no basis for planning for the future because it gave no certainty of funding. That is a very good point and we accept it. We are pointing out that the present legislation does not make that possible for local governments. Under the legislation as it stands, they will not know, year after year, how much money they will receive from the Territory government, and they will have to make their basic financial decisions in the dark. That is the problem that the minister should have addressed and, of course, the problem that he did not address.

The timing of the report from the Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission recommending levels of funding assistance simply does not mesh with the timing of the budgetary cycle imposed on municipal councils by the Local Government Act. These 2 pieces of legislation affecting local government finance should obviously dovetail together. Instead of having an integrated approach to local government finance, we have a situation where the

operation of the Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission Act makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for councils to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act.

This year, the minister informed the councils of their funding levels by letter on 6 November. The information came too late to be used by councils in formulating their budgets for the 1986-87 financial year. I accept that there are particular reasons this year for the lateness of that information, but I put to the government again that the current legislative provisions ensure that it will always be too late for the councils to know what amount of money they will receive from the Northern Territory government before they make their own funding decisions. This is no small matter for councils. The government has acted capriciously this year in telling local governments that they will bear the brunt of government cutbacks. The Darwin City Council, for example, received \$375 000 less than it did last year, the Alice Springs Town Council received \$30 000 less, and Palmerston Town Council received \$100 000 less. It is not an idle matter; it is a very important matter because the councils need some certainty of funding. They, like us, want to know how much money they will have so that they can plan their activities. I do not think that is unreasonable. It is a theme which the Northern Territory government has constantly harped upon in its discussions and negotiations with the federal government. Obviously, however, what is good enough for the Northern Territory government is far too good for local councils.

It is a reflection on this government that it has allowed its financial interaction with local government to get into such a tangle. It is a reflection of the low priority that this government gives to local government matters that the situation has been allowed to reach its current sorry state. We on this side of the Assembly accept that local government is an integral component of Australia's system of government. Whilst the third tier of government is legislatively subordinate to state and Territory governments, that does not imply that it is any less worthy of respect. It is an elected representative body responsible for many services that the community is dependent upon. Local government has significant taxing powers in respect of private property. The Self Report noted that local governments in Australia were increasingly responsible for the provision of human services as well as some more traditional property services. It is in recognition of the significance of local government that we argue that it deserves better and more certain financial treatment than it has received from the Northern Territory government.

Northern Territory government funding has been significantly reduced in this year's budget. It is deceitful of the government to attempt to gloss over the significance of those reductions. It is cowardly to attempt to shift the blame to the Commonwealth government, and it is contemptuous to merely impose real cuts on local governments without any advance warning or discussion. Furthermore, it is plain bad financial management for the government to advise municipal councils of their funding allocations weeks after municipal budgets were supposed to have been drawn up. Even if the cuts to local government funding were absolutely necessary, that information should have been conveyed to councils at the earliest possible opportunity. I can imagine the screams of outrage and protest that would have emerged if the federal government did not get around to advising the Northern Territory government of its allocation of funds until after the federal government brought down its budget.

Mr Perron: You do not know for sure until then anyway.

Mr SMITH: You do know, Mr Speaker. The big difference between the way local government is treated and the way the Territory and state governments are treated is that you know in early June, after the Premiers Conference, roughly how much you will get in the following 12 months. In fact, we know about our funding levels because of the Commonwealth-state financial arrangements that are entered into over a 3-year period. The Northern Territory and the states know what their basic funding levels will be for the next 3 years. The formulae are known.

The Commonwealth ensures that the states and the Territory have advance information of their likely funding. The Commonwealth ensures that there is advance information through the Premiers Conference so that the states and the Territory are in a position to formulate their budgets after proper consideration. All that is required in the Territory is for the Territory government to give advance warning to the local governments of their likely level of funding - in other words, to accord to local governments their due recognition as partners in the 3-tier system of government that operates in Australia.

In his budget speech, the Treasurer referred to the fact that only the Territory government provides top-up grants to local governments. It is for this very reason that a Territory solution needs to be found for the financial problems caused by the timing of advice to local governments. The opposition recognises the problem which the government has created and has several mechanisms in mind for its solution. However, any solution we would adopt in government would not be unilaterally imposed on local governments. We would discuss the problems with local governments and advance our solutions for their consideration. In other words, we would treat local governments as responsible participants in government whose opinions were worthy of being heard.

Two simple mechanisms exist which would probably solve the problem that the government has created. One would be to advise local governments immediately after the Premiers Conference of the likely level of funding they would receive from the Territory government, and that would not be difficult. The second mechanism would be to apply the recommended relativities from the Northern Territory Grants Commission in a lagged fashion. If the established relativities from the previous year were employed in the distribution of funds and the calculation of a particular local government's share, that would be a simple matter once the total budget allocation for local government was established. The Commonwealth and the Territory government are already involved in lagged funding which is adjusted in subsequent years if significant variations are needed. However, in most cases, the relativities between local government would change only slowly and therefore it would not be of any consequence to use the previous year's relativities. Special arrangements will be needed in the case of newly-established local governments but these could be catered for by the special grants mechanism already in place.

Mr Speaker, to come back to the essence of this debate, there are 2 issues. One is the unilateral fashion in which the Northern Territory government has expected local governments to pay in this period of economic restraint. It has hit them adversely much harder than other parts of the community and it has hit them at the worst possible time: after they have had to make their budget decisions. That is the essence of the problem we have in front of us.

It is possible to develop a system, through discussions between the Northern Territory government and local governments and through whatever formal or informal mechanisms that the government of the day wants to put in place, for local governments to be made aware of available funding well in advance of the time when they are required to make their own budgetary decisions. That is a right which the Territory government expects to get from the Commonwealth. It is a right which states expect in their dealings with the Commonwealth and it is a right that we have enjoyed at that level for a long time. It should not be beyond the wit of this Northern Territory government to recognise that there is a problem at present. That problem is causing great concern to councils because it is making life uncertain for them. If it is corrected, it will further the cause of good government in the Northern Territory which, I would have thought, is why we are all here. If this problem is corrected, the cause of good government in the Northern Territory will be furthered and I would have thought we would all be in favour of that.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I would just like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the MPI that has been proposed by the opposition. I quote:

I propose, under standing order 94, that the Assembly discuss this morning, as a definite matter of public importance, the failure of the government to establish a rational means of distributing funds to local and community government organisations.

A 'rational means of distributing funds'. We have not heard one mention of the matter of distribution from opposition speakers. They have not even stuck to what is written in the motion. The minister for local government clearly and concisely explained the new Northern Territory Grants Commission to the Assembly. He described the method used for distributing funds and the rational means of distributing funds. It is an innovation which will be taken up by the rest of the country: the most innovative and fair means of distributing funds to local and community governments. This was not mentioned once by members of the opposition.

We had the member for Nhulunbuy reading out something that he obviously did not understand and we had a pathetic performance from the Leader of the Opposition. I felt very sorry for him because, first of all, he obviously had not listened to the Minister for Community Development and, secondly, he was obviously compromised into having to take part in the debate. Not once did he mention anything about rational means of distribution and not once did he get to the essence of what the motion was about.

The minister explained very clearly and concisely the effects of the timing involved in payments. He pointed out very clearly and concisely that he actually was involved in one day's delay after the appropriate approvals were given by the Commonwealth minister, as is required under the federal act. It is required, and it took him one day to implement the whole procedure. Everything that we heard from the opposition related to timing problems and the amount of funding.

The amount of money should have been raised in relation to the Appropriation Bill. It has nothing to do with rational means of distributing funds. It is something that should have been raised then. The opposition obviously did not even read the Appropriation Bill because it did not make one mention of it. They raised it in this debate and even mixed up their motions. Opposition members do not know what that are doing. These are tough times,

brought about by their federal Labor colleagues who have led this country to the brink of ruin.

We are all suffering because of federal Labor government policies. The opposition is complaining about reduced amounts of money which are a result of the policies of its federal colleagues. The opposition thinks that we should have a money tree growing in the backyard and we should just pluck a whole lot of extra money and give it to local governments. We are all suffering from the lack of money which has been brought about by Labor policies. Money problems should be dealt with in the Appropriation Bill, not in a motion talking about rational means of distribution.

The timing was explained quite adequately by the Minister for Community Development. There was just one day's delay. What a pathetic attempt at wasting the Assembly's time this has been! I will just give one word of advice to the member for Nhulunbuy. If he wants to read something out, he should practice in front of a mirror first so he at least looks as though he is fair dinkum. What a pathetic attempt!

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT  
Deputy Chairman of Committees

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, pursuant to standing order 12, I lay on the table my warrant revoking my nomination of Mrs Padgham-Purich as a Deputy Chairman of Committees and nominate Mr Poole to be a Deputy Chairman of Committees in her place.

BUILDING AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 205)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

In 1985, following adverse publicity about home building standards, the Minister for Housing convened a working party to report on the best means of achieving the maximum level of compliance with the Northern Territory Building Code in the most cost-effective way. One recommendation of the working party was for the Building Act to be amended to provide greater penalties for second and subsequent offences.

Whilst the Building Act introduced in 1984 provides relatively severe maximum penalties, any conviction under the act relates to a specific project and does not take into account any previous convictions that the defaulter may have incurred under the Building Act. Therefore, each offence is treated as a first offence by the court and the penalties imposed may not reflect the fact that the defaulter has a dismal record of poor building practices. There have been cases where persons have defaulted intentionally because of the commercial reality that profits achieved by lowering building standards outweigh the penalties imposed by the act.

It is important that previous convictions are taken into account. The Building Amendment Bill ensures that corporations which have changed their identity since a previous conviction will still attract the higher penalties. The policing of building controls is a constant concern of my department and its policy is to prosecute, without exception, where wilful contraventions of the Building Code have occurred. This will complement the initiatives which have been taken. I commend the bill to honourable members.



Debate adjourned.

TERRITORY INSURANCE OFFICE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 220)

Continued from 27 August 1986.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, it gives me pleasure to support this piece of socialist legislation which will widen the authority of a socialist instrumentality that this government put in place on the recommendation of a Labor government a number of years ago. This small but significant bill widens the powers of the Territory Insurance Office and enables it, on the authority of the minister, to engage in other financial services called, in his second-reading speech, 'limited financial services'. The reason for that is pretty obvious. We are in an era of financial supermarkets which is a phrase that the previous Chief Minister was very keen on 12 months ago. Certainly, we are facing a situation where existing financial institutions are seeking to widen their involvements in financial assistance and advice. I think it is appropriate, in a period when relaxation of government regulation is making it possible for private financial institutions to broaden their services for clients and potential clients, that similar opportunities exist for the Territory Insurance Office.

As I understand it, the specific reason why the government has moved the amendment is to allow the Territory Insurance Office to examine carefully the establishment of an approved deposit fund. Of course, as the minister stated in his second-reading speech, there is the prospect that a number of public servants may choose to cash out their Commonwealth superannuation and join the Northern Territory scheme. The Territory Insurance Office obviously wants to get into that market and we support that.

The bill would give the minister the power to approve provision of financial services in any other areas. As I understand it, the only limitation is that the minister has to approve whatever financial services the TIO wants to deliver. That opens up the possibility, at some later stage, of the Territory Insurance Office going into the banking business and lending money to consumers for various items. Hopefully, that is not what the government is proposing at this stage. I would suspect that such a development would need quite considerable debate within the community. We do not object to the power existing so that it can be exercised at a later date, when circumstances may have altered.

Since the Hawke government came into power, it has moved quite extensively into the area of financial deregulation. It is important that our own financial institutions be deregulated so that they are able to compete quickly and effectively in the context of changes in the financial markets. I think I referred before to the significant movements in terms of provision of financial services. We find building societies, for example, joining with banks to form much larger financial institutions, and we have to be very careful in the Northern Territory that we allow our Territory Insurance Office - of which we can all now be quite proud despite some initial teething problems - to compete fairly and openly in the marketplace.

Mr Speaker, we have one suggestion for this bill and that is that the minister of the day, who allows the Territory Insurance Office to widen its powers and offer financial services which it does not offer at present, should be required to report to the Assembly in some way or other on any approvals he makes in that area. Obviously, it is not a thing that the minister would want

to hide, but I think it would provide an additional safeguard for everybody concerned if there were a requirement for the minister to report to this Assembly where he has exercised that power. We have not moved a formal amendment to that effect, but I would certainly ask the minister to consider it in his response.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, the bill before us effects a small but important change, as the Leader of the Opposition has said. It is not a bill of enormous moment. However, it has 2 component parts. Whilst the Leader of the Opposition addressed one of those parts, which I will touch on again briefly in a moment, the other and major part is the provision for alteration to the existing Territory Insurance Office Act to allow the office to conduct its affairs in respect to workers' compensation insurance as and when there is any change to that legislation. The Work Health Bill is before us at present and there is a technical change within the provisions of this legislation to pick up any future workers' compensation amendments which may be brought into effect by that legislation.

The other part of this bill and its amendments provides for the flexible operation of the Territory Insurance Office to allow it to deal with a much wider range of financial transactions. I support the bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise briefly to take a little further the Leader of the Opposition's comments about the need to have the minister responsible report to this Assembly on decisions he has made under proposed subsection 5(da) to approve financial services. It is no longer good enough for members of this Assembly on either side simply to leave it to ministers to make these decisions and hope that somehow everything will turn out all right. There have been a number of occasions when we have seen that ministers of this government have breached all the principles of responsible government and yet they still sit on the frontbench and have not been pulled up by their own Cabinet colleagues nor by the Chief Minister.

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I think that the honourable member has breached standing orders by casting the aspersion that ministers in the government have breached all principles of responsible government.

Mr SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order and ask the honourable member to withdraw those remarks.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw those remarks.

The point I wish to make - obviously, constrained by standing orders - is that there is a necessity for this Assembly to take an ongoing and very detailed review of decisions made by ministers. Not only have we had allegations that certain conventions of responsible government have been breached, we have had particular cases raised time and time again in this Assembly where various projects have gone ahead without detailed feasibility studies on what was involved and what benefits were expected to accrue. There was nothing that would allow us at a later stage to decide on the success or failure of those enterprises.

It is essential, given the wide-ranging powers provided to the minister, that this Assembly have the proposals tabled at an early stage so that it is able to examine their basic assumptions before the minister makes his decision to allow them to go ahead. This is not a matter of simple politics but a matter of this Assembly conducting its function of review at the earliest possible stage so that, in relation to a new project, we are able to establish

what the minister believes will occur and the expected benefits. This would allow us to review those assumptions and, at a later stage, to review the success or otherwise of the project.

I believe that that is something which members of this Assembly have a responsibility to do. It is rather difficult to do that if the matters in question are simply handled by the executive. It is essential that they be tabled in this Assembly so that we can be fully cognisant of the proposals and all their ramifications and can use this Assembly as a means of testing those proposals before they have gone too far down the track and we find ourselves in the situation that we were in with previous Chief Ministers. Unfortunately, we find now that this Chief Minister is continuing down the same track. We said this morning in the budget debate and on numerous other occasions that it is alarming that various projects have proceeded without adequate opportunity being provided for their proper assessment.

I would ask honourable members opposite to use all the means in their power to urge the minister, as a matter of convention, to table any of his decisions in this Assembly and to amend the legislation to require any minister responsible for this act to provide those details to this Assembly within 4 or 5 sitting days after the actual decision has been tabled.

Debate adjourned.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I move that the Deputy Chief Minister be granted leave of absence for the remainder of these sittings because he is overseas on official government business.

Motion agreed to.

#### REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 200)

Continued from 20 August 1986.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I see no point in aping backbench government members by tediously regurgitating ministers' second-reading speeches. The bill provides a welcome and necessary technological ...

Members interjecting.

Mr Dale: Come on! He is not in the Assembly long. Let us listen to him.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will be heard in silence.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, in response to that interjection, the honourable minister seems to place some extraordinarily juvenile weight on the physical presence of members in the Legislative Assembly. I think I will probably get an opportunity in the adjournment debate this afternoon to demonstrate, much to the dismay of the government, that a great deal of effective work is done outside this Chamber.

The bill before the Assembly is designed to bring us up to date with the impact of computer technology in the registration of births, deaths and marriages in the Northern Territory. There are no contentious matters in either the bill itself or the circulated schedule of amendments, and the opposition supports the legislation.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the member opposite deserves only to be ignored, as the general public knows. He is a bit of a laughing stock in the Territory. No wonder he is back where he belongs.

I am pleased to indicate my support for this bill. The fact that we are using modern technology to get our records of births, deaths and marriages on computer is something to be pleased about. It will make it easier for Territorians to have access to those documents and to obtain copies of them. As most members would appreciate, birth and marriage certificates are important in various applications people make, particularly for passports.

The bill had a number of propositions which are very reasonable and designed to get the record as complete as possible. There is provision for late registrations of births and the registration of a person who claims to be the father if the mother has not entered the name of the father, provided that such a person can satisfy the registrar that he is indeed the father of the child. There is also the opportunity for the parents to change the name of the child once before it reaches the age of 6 years, provided that the parties are in agreement regarding the surname. A child may be given the mother's surname if its parents are not married to each other and, if they marry subsequently, the child's name can be changed with a certain degree of ease.

A problem has arisen in the past where it was illegal to dispose of a stillborn child that was not claimed by the parents for burial. Provision is made now that, if a stillborn child has not been claimed within 6 months, and there are no dubious circumstances, the body can be disposed of. This makes good common sense.

Clause 20, which repeals and replaces section 31 of the act, allows the issue of a death certificate when the cause of death is unknown pending the coroner's investigations. I found, with some amusement, a bit of a faux pas on page 377 of the Parliamentary Record. Anybody who is interested might like to read through it carefully and discover that for himself. In the past, there has been a problem because, until a death certificate has been issued, the estate cannot be handled and relatives depending upon that estate can be in very straitened circumstances. The amendment will allow a death certificate to be issued, indicating the cause of death is unknown pending a coroner's investigation, and that will alleviate hardship.

I note that fees will be put in the regulations rather than the act. Members have often complained that too much is done by regulation and not enough is brought before the Assembly. However, this is reasonably straightforward. If fees for various forms get too high, I am sure there will be an outcry from the community and we will hear all about it. The nature of forms will be set out in regulations also. It is pleasing to note that it is intended to simplify the forms so that the information can be extracted and fed into the computer with a fair degree of ease.

Clause 32 validates a past practice of the registrar. In situations where the father of a child was not named by the mother and the registrar was satisfied that a person claiming to be the father was indeed the father, he registered that person as the father. That action is now validated and there will be no doubt in the records whatsoever. These records provide a resource which allows us to know who is who in the Territory, how many people we have, their ages, and so forth. The Commonwealth is also interested in such information. I am pleased to note the privacy provisions and the promise of the minister that such information will not be available to people without due and just cause. The Commonwealth will receive information, in general

statistical rather than individual form, via the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

When the Chief Minister was in Alice Springs launching the Statehood Convention at the Verdi Club a couple of weeks ago, he mentioned that the Commonwealth wanted to take over our system since the Territory is the first state-like body to have its births, deaths and marriages on computer. It might have the power to do that if it wished. The Chief Minister used this as another example of what the Commonwealth could do, and which statehood would give us some degree of protection from. One can only say: 'Come on statehood'. The amendments contained in this bill are advantageous and non-contentious, and they have my support.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I would like to apologise for any regurgitation that the member for Arafura has said may emanate from this side. I assure the honourable member that my remarks are fresh from the garden, completely fresh meat, and not a YMCA meal which everybody knows for what it is.

Whilst I agree with the content of the legislation, I disagree with some small points. I concur heartily with some clauses in the bill and, if it were possible to make them stronger, I would do so. I would like to compliment the minister on the amendment covering registration where no particulars of the father appear in the Register of Births. That is an amendment contained in proposed section 16A. Clause 16 relates to changing of a child's surname by the mother. Both of these amendments give the fathers of children the right to have their names registered as fathers of the children. Proposed new section 16A says that a father can register his name as the father of his child up to 12 months after the birth of the child and, in certain circumstances, after that time. Clause 16, which amends section 19 of the principal act, says that the name of the child can be changed if the father consents. This is relevant where the mother is married to someone other than the father of the child.

It is all very well for a man to assume the responsibility of fatherhood on paper and write his name down as father of the child, but responsibilities go with these written rights. I would like to see even stronger legislation to ensure that men who profess to be the fathers of children accept responsibility for those children after birth as fathers in more regular situations do. It is all very well to say that they were responsible for the child's birth but probably that was only a little bit of fun. The responsibility carried by somebody who has the interests of the child at heart extends for a long time after that; it extends for 10 or 20 years after the child is born.

We hear too much these days of mothers being completely responsible for the upkeep of their children and, in default of a mother being able to look after her child adequately, the government looks after the child through social welfare benefits, education benefits and health benefits. It is well and truly time for the fathers responsible for bringing these children into the world to accept their full responsibilities. If it were left to me, I would pursue them to the fullest extent of the law to make sure that they did so. My husband and I brought 6 children into the world and he accepts his full share of responsibility for those children. However, as he said to me many years ago, why should he accept the responsibility of other men by contributing through his taxes to rearing those other children? Their own fathers should do that.

It appears from clause 15, which relates to change of name of child other than surname, that the child's Christian name or given name can be changed once, if the parents so wish, up to the age of 6 years. However, proposed section 19A, relating to a change of a child's surname by the parents, provides that the child's surname can be changed to the surname of the father, the surname of the mother or a combination of those 2. But there is no statement as to how many times this can be done. I would like the minister to address that. It appears that the surname can be changed as many times as the parents wish, but the Christian name or given name can only be changed once, and rightly so. In view of this very accommodating proposed section 19A, I would like to know how many applications there have been for this. Was it included in response to many applications by parents and prospective parents or did somebody simply think it was a good idea at the time when this legislation was drafted?

This bill exemplifies our government's continuous updating of legislation in recognition of changing times and a population which changes more rapidly than in the states. Our population increases generally at a higher rate and some places also experience sudden increases and declines with the commencement and completion of particular local projects. It is very important to have a stable and continuous registration of these changes and the births and deaths and marriages that take place.

I agree wholeheartedly that much of the information that has been requested by previous legislation will now be requested by regulation. That makes sense.

The minister said: 'It is hoped to prescribe forms in which persons registering births or deaths will be required to indicate whether they consider themselves to be Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders. This has been requested by the Commonwealth'. I have some objections to that in view of the fact that I would like to think Australians are a homogenous group of people. I know people from different ethnic groups have come to Australia in the past and they will come in the future but, in the interests of peace and harmony, I think these divisions should not be encouraged. The Commonwealth government particularly encourages them and, because of our situation as a territory, we are bound to follow its legislation. The encouragement of partitions in our community does us no good. I would like to see this provision about the registration of Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders as separate people reconsidered at a later date because, if one is separating out a particular ethnic group, why stop at Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders? Why don't we have separate registration for people of Chinese or Italian or even Anglo-Saxon origin? Why do we always have to separate people into particular ethnic groups? Apart from that small objection, Mr Speaker, I support the legislation.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank members for their comments on this particular bill and also to thank the opposition for its support. I will be quite brief with respect to the concerns of the member for Koopilyah.

The provision relating to surname change will not be used as a means of escaping the provisions applying to changes of name by deed poll. It will be used under the requirements of the act without causing any problems.

With regard to allowing people to nominate their racial origin, it is a fact of life that there are certain requirements under Commonwealth legislation. There are certain benefits in financial terms which are

available to governments in relation to the ethnic composition of their populations. In order to be able to obtain the benefits of those provisions, the statistical information must be available to the Commonwealth. While such legislative requirements exist, it is incumbent upon us to follow suit. I think that covers all the concerns which were raised.

Motion agreed to; bill read second time.

See Minutes for amendments agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stage without debate.

NATIONAL TRUST (NORTHERN TERRITORY) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 217)

Continued from 28 August 1986.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, as the minister outlined in the second reading, this bill reflects the development that has occurred since the original National Trust legislation was introduced in the Territory. There are places outside Darwin and Alice Springs that have bodies which are actively involved in the National Trust. This will allow them to form branches. The opposition supports the amendments.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

STATUTE LAW REVISION BILL  
(Serial 216)

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, what can one say about Statute Law Revision Bills? Only one thing. I must say that as a matter of practice, and there has been some comment on this in the past, it is annoying to have bills introduced and to then have schedules of amendments that are larger than the bills themselves. I am not sure whether it is the government's intention to proceed immediately with the committee stage of the bill but I assume it is. I reiterate the objections that I have made to this practice in the past. A reasonable schedule of amendments is inevitable with most legislation but it is not a commendable practice to have a raft of amendments that almost completely replace the original bill.

I had a conversation the other day with one of the officers of the Assembly about statute law revision bills. I must comment that, in the past, little things that can completely change the complexion of legislation have been slipped through in statute law revision bills. That, of course, is not what statute law revision bills are designed to do. In fact, members will note that the short titles of all statute law revision bills indicate that they are designed to revise and correct the law of the Territory in minor respects.

As a matter of principle, no substantive change to legislation should ever go through the Assembly under the guise of a statute law revision bill. All honourable members would appreciate the very substantial changes that can be made to legislation by the omission or insertion of a single word,

particularly words such as 'no' or 'not' which can alter sections of the legislation. However, it has been the experience of this Assembly over the years that these bills have been substantially accurate in their changes to the law and, in the main, non-contentious.

I do not have the resources available to me to examine scrupulously every single aspect of such bills. My practice has been to take a random sample of the changes and to check that they do what they are supposed to do. I have done that in this case. I indicate to the government that I do not see any particular objection to proceeding with the committee stage of the bill. However, I ask the government in future not to introduce substantial schedules of amendments that outweigh the contents of the original bill.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to this bill, I draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that it has been introduced purely for the purpose of housekeeping. Since this area was first designated as the Northern Territory of Australia, many bills and regulations were introduced by the various state governments which controlled us. I refer particularly to New South Wales and South Australia. In many cases, legislation enacted by those states is still on our books and we are still bound by it. Control of the Northern Territory passed from New South Wales to South Australia and finally to the Commonwealth and I trust that that situation will not last very much longer.

Over the years, our statute books have been clogged with many pieces of legislation which have long since failed to have any relevance to the operation of our government in this day and age. It is a fact of life that, although parliaments continue to enact new legislation and amend what already exists, they have often overlooked the necessity of discarding antiquated legislation which no longer serves any useful purpose. This bill is somewhat different to the normal Statute Law Revision Bills that have been enacted in other states because a large part refers to a number of South Australian statutes whose application to the Territory is to be repealed.

Schedule 3 refers to some which date back to the 1800s. This bill will remove them from our books. Whilst under the control of the South Australian government, the Northern Territory was subjected to all of its laws. The 26 acts being repealed today are part of the legacy we inherited upon attaining self-government. The Statute Law Revision Act of 1985 repealed 871 similarly outmoded and inactive acts. The bill we are debating today continues the government's policy of rationalising all of our legislation. There are a number of outdated acts still in force and these are currently being reviewed as an ongoing process. I hope that, within the next 12 months, we will have cleansed our statute books of all of those old acts.

Schedule 3 is divided into 3 parts. Let me give some examples of the type of legislation to which I have referred so that you will realise the need for this action. Part 1 of schedule 3 refers to an 1852 act to regulate friendly societies and a private act of 1874, the Manchester Unity Oddfellows Act. That is really interesting stuff that is irrelevant to the Territory today. Part 2 refers to miscellaneous private acts such as an 1850 ordinance to establish the South Australian Widows Fund and the General Annuity Endowment Society and to provide for the management and security of the funds thereof. That has no relevance at all in today's Northern Territory. One of the most important ones to be repealed under part 3 is the Homing Pigeon Act of 1905.

Mr Speaker, as you can see, these acts bear no relevance to the good government of the Northern Territory today. There are 2 other schedules



contained in this bill and, together with the amendments included in schedule 92, they will implement minor technical amendments to existing acts. The revision of statute law is an important and necessary function of this Assembly. I believe it should be an ongoing process until, hopefully, we reach the stage to which I referred before, where we have totally cleansed our books of this unnecessary and outmoded legislation. I commend the minister for bringing this bill before the Assembly and trust he will continue to pursue the exercise with zeal.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, it is amazing how the former Leader of the Opposition is able to get up and have his say. When anybody else gets up to have a say, he sits there with his mouth open looking as though other people have no right to say anything.

Mr B. Collins: I did not say a word.

Mr D.W. Collins: You did not have to. It is written all over your mug.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. Collins: There is only one mug in this room.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Both the member for Sadadeen and indeed the member for Arafura will withdraw those unparliamentary remarks.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw my remark.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise briefly to express my pleasure at the removal of more of the old South Australian acts which have applied to the Territory.

We had a very big clean-up of acts earlier in this session of the parliament. Legislation such as the Port Adelaide Railway Act obviously had no relevance to the Territory and these have been pruned from our statute book. Other acts required considerable study to determine beyond doubt that they had no application. I would like to record my thanks to the secretaries of the backbench Statute Law Review Committee for their work and for the cooperation of the South Australian government in checking out the relevance of those acts.

It was possible, for example, that legislation first enacted in South Australia in the 1890s may have been subsequently amended there, and still have had some relevance to us. These extra 26 acts have been checked out thoroughly and it has been deemed safe to remove them from our statute book. There are 67 South Australian acts remaining on our books, 47 of which are very complicated. These are being reviewed by the Department of Law, a process which could take a very long time because of their complex technical nature and the need to check them against other Territory legislation. I imagine that it will be a number of years before we can finally get rid of old South Australian legislation and replace it with modern legislation which suits today's circumstances.

I am pleased at the progress that has been made and would like to record my thanks to the people who have been very helpful to my committee in checking this legislation. It has not been a simple task by any means. The final 67 acts will not so much be scrapped as replaced by more relevant legislation, and that will take considerable time.

If one attends the Assembly and takes note of the business of the Assembly, it is easy enough to see why the minor changes in the bill are there. The changing of a word in one act has some relevance to another, and so further changes are made. It is housekeeping stuff but it is important that we get it right. That is what this bill is about, and it has my full support.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their comments. As has been stated, the purpose of the bill is to remove statutes which are no longer relevant to the Territory. As the member for Arafura commented, the amendment schedule is a rather large one. If any member other than the member for Arafura had made that remark, I would have presumed that he had seen the amendments for the first time. However, I know he has done his best to review amendments. They are of a housekeeping nature but they certainly do take up 4 pages. That is the nature of the beast. The Statute Law Revision Bill is full of tedious and minor changes of a technical nature and small changes required to bring legislation up to date. I apologise to the member. The next time I have a bill of this nature before me, I will ensure that I provide a detailed briefing to the honourable member to clarify matters regarding the amendment schedule.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendments agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stage without debate.

WORK HEALTH BILL  
(Serial 232)

Continued from 13 November 1986.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this may make the Guinness Book of Records. I am delivering my third second-reading speech on the subject of work health legislation within the last 8 or 9 months and, unfortunately, each time I respond to the government's initiatives with less and less enthusiasm, because it is clear that every time we see the latest, updated draft of the Work Health Bill it has less and less in it for the workers it is supposed to cover.

Mr Speaker, we can all support a piece of legislation whose aim is to bring much-needed reform to the workers' compensation area. On this side of the Assembly, we have strongly supported the concept of a fairer, more just and more humane workers' compensation system. However, I regret to say that what lies before the Assembly today is a sadly impotent piece of work. From the original Doody Inquiry until today, there has been a continual watering-down of the effectiveness and potency of the bill.

It is no longer a balancing act, as the Chief Minister termed it in his second-reading speech. In fact, what it shows more clearly than anything else is the inability of the Chief Minister who, of course, is the sponsor of this bill, to represent the interests of all Territorians. In fact, he has reached the stage where, in this bill, he is clearly representing the interests of his previous employer, the Confederation of Industry, and certainly not the workers in the Northern Territory. In this bill, the scales are now tipped firmly in favour of the employers and it is indicative of this government's impotence that it has succumbed to pressure at the expense of workers.

Mr Speaker, maintenance of living standards for ourselves and our families, should we be so unfortunate as to be injured, is a basic right to which we are all entitled. This legislation started out some months ago as an attempt to reinforce that principle. It was to bring the Northern Territory into line with other states which are addressing the issue and it gave us the opportunity to achieve what has been difficult to achieve elsewhere. We were in a unique position due to our small size and the relative newness of the bureaucracy. However, this opportunity has been all but lost in this bill because the government has buckled under pressure. This has been an ongoing phenomenon. Each time this legislation has been tabled in the Assembly, it has been eroded further and distanced from the original intent of the Doody Report.

The right to compensation is not the issue. The issue is more the mode of delivery, the process that facilitates it, and the supporting functions that make it a comprehensive, fair and just system. I will say again that we are not arguing today about the right to compensation. We all accept that. What we are talking about is the mode of delivery of that compensation: the process that facilitates that compensation and the supporting functions that make that compensation comprehensive, fair and just.

I will go into some detail later about the particular aspects that are of concern to us, but first I will discuss the aspects that we support. We support the establishment of an authority with 3 main functions: prevention, compensation and rehabilitation. We believe that prevention of work place accidents is critical to success. However, in this bill, the occupation, health and safety functions and powers of the authority reduce it virtually to the status of an after-the-event investigator. For prevention to be a serious component in cost reduction - and it is a fact that it can only be vaguely quantified by the actuaries, as we all know if we have read the actuaries' report - the authority needs to have powers at least comparable to other agencies in the area, as I pointed out in my speech to this Assembly in August. However, it is a feature of this bill that the authority's powers are weaker than they have been in previous bills.

The establishment, implementation and control of minimum standards of safety in all Territory work places requires commitment and focus. To obtain attitudinal change and work place awareness at the post-incident phase, as this bill proposes, is too late for the worker. The emphasis should be on attaining attitudinal change and work place awareness before incidents take place. Avoiding this issue could result in little change in the occurrence of accidents and that, of course, will contribute to the cost of the scheme.

The compensation outlined in this bill has been reduced from that proposed in the original bill. Again, it is the injured worker, particularly the lower-income worker with dependants, who is disadvantaged. Low-income earners will find that their entitlements under this bill put them below the poverty line. A worker with a family, who is unlucky enough to be injured, will be hurled into the poverty abyss. Whilst the government is attempting to contain the cost for employers, it is doing so at the expense of the worker.

Mr Perron: What happens to him now?

Mr SMITH: I will come to that and I will tell you.

We will be moving amendments to ensure realistic compensation and to minimise hardship for workers and their families.

The third important component of this legislation is rehabilitation. We agree that this is a vital area. The return to work and society with dignity and independence is not only a great shift in philosophy, but also socially responsible. However, we are still not convinced that the services and facilities available in the Territory are adequate. We know there is a great shortage of therapists in the Territory and we feel again that this is an area that has been given inadequate attention.

This bill has been widely discussed and we would like to acknowledge the cooperation we have received from the government and particularly the authority. This brings me to another concern. The structure and operations of the authority have been considerably reduced from what was originally intended. The fact that there will be no regional officers seems to us to be a problem and I am sure it is a problem to some of the backbenchers of the government as well. We would have thought that the provision of investigation, counselling and information services outside Darwin would be intrinsic to the effectiveness of the administration of the legislation. One of the results of not having regional offices is that the process of getting benefits to workers will slow down, particularly in some of the more remote areas of the Northern Territory. That will be one of the problems that the government will face early in the operation of this act.

We also have concerns about the education, training and awareness program that must accompany the implementation of the act. There is still no attempt to rationalise the agencies involved with occupational health and safety and we estimate that up to 30 positions could be involved. Should these functions be centralised? In our view, and we have argued it consistently, they should be. The concept of umbrella legislation, which was a proud boast of the government when initially introducing this legislation, has been undermined by its failure to create an umbrella occupational health services organisation. That was the original intent and, in our opinion, it would have created efficiencies and coordination, to the advantage of both employers and workers. It would have been a much sounder administrative base for effective operation.

The cost of premiums is an area that will need close scrutiny, and the Premiums Monitoring Committee will need to be conscious of its duty in this regard.

A far greater problem is under-insurance. This is one area where the provisions of this bill differ from those of its predecessor. The attempt to offset under-insurance problems, estimated at roughly 50%, has been defeated by the inability of the authority to police insurance cover through the tax system. This is encapsulated in the amendment outlining the new audit procedure. It is not clear exactly how this new audit procedure will work. I am intrigued about the disappearance of the 1% stamp duty and the role of the Commissioner of Taxes in premium avoidance monitoring.

As I have said, the new bill does not make it clear how this important area will operate. In the government's all-out attempt to reduce costs, I greatly fear that certain basic principles have now been lost. Under-insurance was a major catalyst for reform. Without a comprehensive cyclical examination of wages declarations, this deliberate and unscrupulous avoidance of paying premiums cannot be turned around. It would seem that the taxpayer must carry the costs of those checks now and it remains to be seen whether or not there will be a significant increase in the numbers taking out insurance or obtaining exemption certificates under these new arrangements.

I invite the Chief Minister to address the problem that we see in the auditing area, and to tell us how the auditing function, which previously was funded by an impost of 1% stamp duty, will now be funded. More importantly, we would like him to inform us how it will work effectively to pick up those unscrupulous employers who have not been paying workers' compensation premiums.

Another component which must add to the cost factor is the inability of the legislation to completely eliminate the common law element. The possibility of vicarious liability and a potential for action outside the Territory means that the \$2m liability cover will still apply. Whilst we understand the need for this cover, it nonetheless adds to the cost of premiums. Given that the actuaries found that 'existing premiums contained larger profit margins than required, to the tune of about 22%', I cannot help but feel that this, combined with under-insurance, gives considerable room for a more realistic benefits schedule.

I would like now to talk in some detail about the benefits or lack of benefits which I see as being the major area of concern in this bill. It seems to me that workers have been victimised unfairly as a result of the government's efforts to stay sweet with employers, when all the indications are that system inefficiencies are more at fault. In my speech on 2 August, I acknowledged the level of death benefit as generous and supported the realism embodied in this benefit. It was at least an improvement on the current benefit.

It is also noted that prescribed children receive a weekly benefit of 7% of average weekly earnings. We feel that that level is inadequate. In its social indicators program, OECD recommends a relativity for 1 child at 29% of the adult couple payment. Pensioner couples in Australia with 1 child receive 12% more than couples without children. Survival costs, without taking into account housing, transport, medical, dental or child-care services, are estimated to be on a scale which goes from \$20.20 per week for young children to \$50.20 per week for teenagers. These sorts of figures and benchmarks indicate that the percentage level for death benefits for children in the bill is clearly inadequate. We are therefore proposing an increase. Similarly, we will be proposing that dependent children be provided for under benefits for incapacity.

I would like to turn my attention now to injury and incapacity benefit levels in general. For the first 26 weeks, an injured worker receives his normal weekly earnings - that is something which has not changed from the present situation. After the first 26 weeks, an injured worker receives 70% of normal weekly earnings, up to a ceiling of 150% of average weekly earnings. That is a 10% reduction on the first bill introduced, in the sense that, under the first draft, the worker could receive 80% of normal weekly earnings. That has been reduced to 70%. This is an area of considerable concern. The actuaries' report discovered that the ratio of wages of injured workers to average weekly earnings was about 3:4. In other words, the average worker in the Northern Territory was earning about 75% of average weekly earnings. On current levels, that would put normal weekly earnings for the average worker at \$300 per week. According to the actuaries, \$330 per week is the figure that the average worker in the Northern Territory would be earning at present.

After 26 weeks, the person will receive a benefit which is 70% of what he was previously earning. In the case of the average worker in the Territory, 70% of \$330 is \$231. Of course, tax must come out of that \$231. This is what we are going to pay the average worker in the Northern Territory if he is

unlucky enough to have a permanent injury or one that takes him out of the work force for more than 26 weeks. The generosity of our Work Health Scheme is such that he will receive \$231.

In February 1986, the Henderson Inquiry demonstrated that the poverty line figure for Australia was \$247. That figure is 56.5% of average weekly earnings. We all know that it costs more to live in the Northern Territory than it does in other parts of Australia and we can safely assume that the poverty line in the Northern Territory, according to the Henderson Inquiry, will be higher than \$247. Under this scheme, we will be condemning people to live in poverty. The average worker who is unfortunate enough to be injured will be forced to live below the poverty line defined by the Henderson Inquiry whose figures have gained universal acceptance in Australia.

On these figures, the average worker who has a family will suffer considerable economic hardship. We are creating a new group of citizens who will be caught in the poverty trap. Not only that, the average worker with a family will be worse off under the new scheme than he is under the present scheme. I will give an example. A worker with 2 children who was paid \$300 per week would receive \$277 under the current scheme, including spouse and dependent child allowance. In other words, if he had a spouse and 2 children and was earning \$300 a week before he was injured, his earnings under the workers' compensation scheme would be \$277 after the first 26 weeks. Under our new, 'you-beaut' work health scheme, that same family will receive \$215. In other words, it will be \$62 per week worse off than it is under the present scheme and it will be \$32 below the poverty line. How any government, in all justice, can seriously propose a system with those end results, I do not know. I made this point the last time we addressed this bill and I urge the government to look at those figures again because we are faced with a serious problem. We are condemning people to the poverty gap.

It does not stop there, Mr Speaker. The permanent impairment benefit has also been reduced to 104 times average weekly earnings; that is, approximately \$46 000. In other words, you receive \$46 000 if you suffer a permanent impairment and cannot go back to work. Under the old scheme and the table of maims, a worker could have received up to \$57 000. Not only has the weekly benefit for the average worker been reduced significantly, the permanent impairment figure has been reduced by \$11 000 from \$57 000 to \$46 000.

It is noted that the scheme is also geared towards more severe injuries in that less than 15% impairment, under the American guidelines, attracts no compensation. Whilst we accept the philosophy behind this move, we deplore the erosion of benefits. We can only presume that it is a knee-jerk reaction to the actuaries' report. It is widely accepted that that report is extremely conservative. It is also apparent that the actuaries were not unanimous in their findings and it is further obvious that the lack of hard information about workers' compensation in the Territory made for an extremely cautious report.

Mr Speaker, in this Assembly, we should be in the business of ensuring justice and fair play. Because this government is afraid to upset a few powerful supporters, the workers of the Territory will not receive justice and fair play. We intend to scrutinise every aspect of the implementation and operation of the scheme and we will continue to agitate strongly for raising the benefit levels because it is our view that they are unduly harsh. We further believe that the conservatism of the actuaries will not be justified in practice. We urge this Assembly to reconsider its position in the light of the hardship it will impose on the average worker in the Northern Territory if

this bill goes ahead in its present form. It is clear that the emphasis needs to be shifted so that the onus is placed on employers to reduce accidents as a cost-containment measure, not reduce benefits to injured workers as a means of reducing the cost of insurance.

There are a number of other proposed amendments to this bill that I want to touch on briefly. We notice that there is an attempt to clarify responsibility in the contracting chain. That is a difficult matter and we are pleased to note that it has been addressed. Similarly, we support the corresponding amendment in relation to diseases contracted out of employment.

We have some difficulties, however, with the audit provisions in clause 14, as I have indicated earlier. It would seem intrinsic that a proper and effective means of identifying under-insurance be put in place, but that does not seem to be the case. As I have said, that matter seems to have been substantially weakened by this bill. We ask the sponsor of the bill to address that particular matter in his concluding remarks. Honest employers should not subsidise, through premium costs, those employers who shirk their responsibilities. The key question is whether this new arrangement will ensure systematic and cyclical checks and whether it will pick up those employers who have smaller payrolls. To be fair, the audit checks should be both universal and regular.

Clause 32 is an attempt to avoid disputes over the immediate risk situation. We hope this will facilitate speedy resolution and prevent unnecessary disputes arising. We continue to be dismayed by the soft powers in relation to occupational health and safety provisions. It is apparent that, without any officers outside Darwin, there will be difficulties in exercising powers outside Darwin. We feel strongly that prevention of work place accidents has not been given sufficient priority by this government.

Clause 49 specifically excludes the inclusion of overtime in normal weekly earnings and, as a principle, we have no problem with that. However, it is clear that, in some jobs, overtime is a condition of service and therefore a component of normal earnings. Prison officers are an example. We all know that they receive very low basic rates of pay, and that their expectation and the government's expectation is that those low rates of pay will be boosted through regular overtime. In such a circumstance, we believe it is unfair for overtime provisions to be excluded from the calculations which determine the compensation entitlement, and we intend to move an amendment to correct that situation. Similarly, we have noted the prescribed list of allowances that are acceptable for assessment of normal weekly earnings, and we will be moving to extend and expand that provision.

The new clause to grant rehabilitation counsellor's privilege is supported. We are aware that clause 65 attempts to treat apprentices more fairly. However, we do not believe that it goes far enough and we will be proposing a further amendment to give this clause more specificity. In the same vein, we note the attempt to cover voluntary workers such as firemen and emergency service volunteers and will be moving to have the compensation specified in the act rather than as a prescribed calculation. As I have outlined, we continue to have difficulties in relation to the benefits and shall be moving accordingly.

Mr Speaker, we intend to progress with the majority of amendments, as previously advised. Other than those I have spoken about, there are no other significant changes we would like to foreshadow. This is an extremely complex

piece of legislation and its evolution has been disappointing. We note that the administrative orders have not yet been tabled, and it may well be that some of our concerns could have been allayed had we been au fait with arrangements proposed between the various departments administering safety legislation.

There are some fine aspects to the bill, notwithstanding our philosophical stance on common law, of which this Assembly is well aware. Generally, we would give the bill our support. However, I want to say that the basic approach that we have taken to this bill is to ensure that the rights and interests of workers are protected. We have acknowledged a commitment to common law because we believe it offers some rights to workers and an incentive to employers to develop safe working places. We have not concentrated on nor pushed that area strongly because our bottom line is the level of benefits that workers will receive under this bill. I must say that we were very happy with the first draft of this bill in terms of the level of benefits. At that stage, we believed that the government had struck a fair and equitable balance between the interests of the workers, the interests of the employers and other people and groups who had an interest in the Work Health Scheme.

The problem is that the benefits payable have been reduced significantly with each draft of the bill. That is where our major difficulty lies. We now have a situation where an average worker in the Northern Territory who is unfortunate enough to be permanently incapacitated after 2 January 1987 will receive less money than he would receive under present legislation - and that is ignoring the common law element. Ignoring common law as it now applies, and looking at the weekly benefits and the lump sum payment for permanent impairment, the average worker will be worse off.

Mr Speaker, that is an intolerable position in which to place workers in the Northern Territory. We are condemning the average worker - the person who, on the Bureau of Statistics' figures and the actuaries' figures, is receiving about 70% to 75% of average weekly earnings - and that worker's family to a life of penury, a life below the poverty line defined by the Henderson Inquiry. I put it to all thinking members of this Assembly that that is not good enough and, even at this stage, it is not too late to consider the plight of the average worker. I know that it is hard for us, on our reasonable salaries, to realise the plight of the average worker who in many cases is struggling even now to live on his existing level of wages and conditions.

What we are saying to that average worker is that, if he is unlucky enough to be injured at work, we will take 30% of his earnings off him. We will not recognise that he might have a spouse and kids that he has to feed and keep and send to school in order to turn them into worthwhile citizens of the Northern Territory. We will not recognise any of that because it might make the scheme too expensive. All we will do is give him this pittance which is \$60 less than he could have got on 30 December 1986 and \$40 less than the Henderson Inquiry says he should receive to keep him above the poverty line. That is all we will give him and we will wipe our hands of him.

I am telling members opposite that they are creating enormous problems for themselves if they do not remedy that situation. As I said, it is not too late. They have one last chance to fix it or else this legislation will prove to be an enormous stumbling block and will be a laughing stock in the rest of Australia. Unfortunately, the workers affected by it will not be laughing because they will be too busy trying to eke out a living.



Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, we have just been subjected to what was in my view a very emotive display by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Smith: That is right, because I have done my figures. Have you?

Mr FIRMIN: Mr Speaker, I thank him for his interjection because it suggests that we do not have the same respect or feeling for the workers of the Northern Territory - which is totally incorrect - and that we are doing something dreadfully wrong. I would like to take up his last point first, before I attempt to pick up some of the other points he made in respect of the legislation.

In his last point, the Leader of the Opposition gave the impression that an injured worker would immediately come under the Work Health Act. That is blatantly untrue and he knows it to be untrue because he has been briefed on the legislation. For the first 26 weeks after the injury, the worker will receive his full wages.

Mr Smith: I made that point, Col.

Mr FIRMIN: What he is saying to us then, presumably, is that all of the workers will have this poverty line problem in respect of the act. Perhaps one of his colleagues might like to tell me how many workers have injuries whose effects extend beyond 26 weeks and how many of them are on such low wages that they will end up on the poverty line when they receive 70% of their former earnings.

Mr Smith: Even if there was only one.

Mr FIRMIN: I am pleased to hear that interjection because it may well be only one. It certainly will not be a great number of people, I can tell you that.

Mr Smith: You do not care?

Mr FIRMIN: Let me put that in context. Again, I think it shows his misunderstanding of this bill because, whilst it might only be a few people - and I certainly feel for those people - he was referring to wages only and not to all the other benefits that have been provided for in the legislation. That amazes me, Mr Speaker.

I would like to recap for a moment. The Leader of the Opposition indicated that there have been a considerable number of inquiries into workers' compensation starting with the Doody Report of 3 years ago which was finally tabled in this Assembly in 1984. If, as the Leader of the Opposition would have people believe, we do not have any feelings for our workers in the Northern Territory and we do not take cognisance of any of the evidence that has been put before us about the way in which we should provide benefits for those workers, one would wonder why we did not put an act into place in 1984 instead of waiting until now. We have had 2 years of inquiry, for goodness sake. The Doody Report was tabled in early 1984 and we entered consultations with both the private and the public sectors. We have had innumerable discussions with the opposition, the union members, the legal fraternity, the Insurance Council of Australia, the medical profession, the Master Builders Association - you name it, everybody has put proposals to us in respect of the Work Health Bill. We have done that on numerous occasions.

As recently as last month, after the tabling of the draft Work Health Bill, we gave the unions, the Law Society, the opposition, the Master Builders Association and the employers another opportunity to comment. This ongoing discussion with the public and the employers has resulted in some of the amendments that we have before us today. There has been debate even within our own party about the method of approach to the legislation and some of the opposition's points have also been picked up. I will not have the Leader of the Opposition continue to put forward the view that this act is deficient in its attitudes and responses to the majority of workers in the Northern Territory. That is just not true.

In respect of workers' compensation and some of our dilemmas, let me quote for a moment from the Australian Financial Review of Monday 8 September 1986.

Mr Ede: A good socialist paper.

Mr FIRMIN: Yes, a good socialist paper. But it tells it like it is:

The impending crisis in workers' compensation in New South Wales, the controversy over the real costs of the Victorian government's work care system and the South Australian government push for a no-fault government monopoly of workers' compensation, demonstrate the need for a fundamental overhaul of present approaches to workers' compensation.

The discomfort over workers' compensation stems from the fact that the costs of the system have been spiralling in recent years. In New South Wales, companies in workers' compensation estimate that they need a 70% rise in premiums just to stay in business.

New Zealand has had a similar problem. In 1973, it initiated a workers' compensation scheme that was partially funded. It was similar to ours in some respects, except that it was only partially funded. It had no common law determination and allowed for a benefit of 75% of weekly earnings. It has been running since 1973 and, after 9 years, it has a \$101m deficit. The South Australian fund has now reached a point where it is so deficient that it no longer publishes an annual report. British Columbia in Canada introduced a scheme similar to ours to help overcome enormous deficits built up over 9 years, and the new system is starting to break even after a \$500m deficit in 1983, expressed in 1983 Australian dollars.

Workers' compensation has been a problem in all parts of Australia. I quote again from the Financial Review:

With the New South Wales state compensation board allowing only a 20% increase, many companies have pulled out of the area, with 3 of the remaining 16 threatening to follow suit from 30 September. It is claimed that this would leave the New South Wales government insurance office, which currently has 25% of the business, with a potential \$500m a year loss, from its inherited monopoly role.

There is a lot more about that in the Financial Review but I will not read it all to you today. I am trying to illustrate the problems that the Territory government was facing with respect to the need to review workers' compensation legislation. The need for review did not apply only to rehabilitation methods, but also to a premium structure which would enable workers to receive a reasonable benefit in the event of injury or death.

Insurance companies and the TIO could not continue operating whilst facing the possible massive losses which had occurred not only within Australia but certainly in most of the western world. Rationalisation was required. This government, to its credit, took that responsibility head on and established the board of inquiry under Mr Doody.

Mr Ede: And then ignored its recommendations.

Mr FIRMIN: It took up most of its recommendations, except those which the opposition seems to view as most important, such as a single-insurer scheme and the retention of common law. In terms of premium charges, the common law section of the Workers' Compensation Act was its most destructive aspect. However, we took up most of the recommendations of the Doody Report. We decided that a multiple insurer system was the best approach. In our view, there is no great benefit to be gained by putting the scheme into the hands of one insurer such as the TIO so long as participating insurance companies have a reasonable attitude to premiums.

I will digress for a moment to advise the Assembly that I recently attended a meeting of the Insurance Councils of Australia. I addressed the meeting here in Darwin which was attended by the national president, the secretary and the executive officer of the organisation. I put it very squarely to them that, in this revised Work Health Bill, there is provision for savings in premiums. I put it to them because of the long-term winding down of pre-existing claims under the existing Workers' Compensation Act which will continue for some time after that act ceases to exist. If the insurance companies see premium reductions under the new Work Health Act as a remedy for offsetting losses flowing from the previous legislation, they would be extremely short-sighted. I put it to them that they would probably be placing themselves in some jeopardy with respect to the multiple insurer scheme.

Whilst they cannot be quantified, there are claims under the existing workers' compensation scheme which have been incurred but not reported and claims reported and not yet finalised. In some cases, this may take a considerable number of years, particularly in the case of people who are currently under 21 years of age. It could be another 10 to 15 years before some claims are finalised and it is particularly difficult for companies to assess that situation at present. However, if they were to take the short-term gain of premium reduction that is inherently possible under our scheme and apply that with great vigour in the short-term, there would be no savings in premiums for the next few years under the new scheme in the Northern Territory. I told the meeting that, if insurers did that, they might find themselves in a position where pressure from employers on government could lead to a review of the decision to operate a multiple insurer scheme. They assured me that they would not adopt that approach and I certainly hope that they do not.

Mr Speaker, in my view, this bill has some very positive features. I have addressed one already: the flexibility of the scheme in respect of the premium components and the compensation payable. As I said earlier, I do not believe that a very large number of workers, if any, will be disadvantaged. One of the major features of the scheme is its occupational health and safety aspects, particularly in respect of ongoing treatment for injured workers. This is a self-regulatory scheme and that is a highlight. I have not seen the opposition's schedule of amendments yet because it has not been circulated. The opposition argued strongly about that point and may still feel strongly about it. But self-regulation, in respect of the employers' methods of ensuring the safety of their work places, is the correct way in which to

approach the issue of workers' safety. There are checks within the Work Health Act that provide that, where it is obvious that an employer has not put into place sufficient safety mechanisms to protect workers, the authority can intervene.

We disagreed with the opposition's proposal in the earlier stages that there be automatic inspections by union representatives in all parts of the Territory and that such representatives should have the right to enter work places, unannounced, to see whether they were safe or not. Mr Speaker, you could imagine the sort of response we had to that.

The worker has duties in respect of his injuries and rehabilitation. There is a duty laid down in the legislation of attendance for rehabilitation and I think that is a very good provision. For some considerable time, I have been bemused by evidence that I have seen in sport where a football player of either code can play a game on a weekend, suffer a broken arm or leg and, within a matter of some 3 weeks, be in training again after physiotherapy, and be very close to playing on the field within 4 to 5 weeks. As a previous insurance company manager who had to handle workers' compensation claims, I found it completely mystifying how a sportsman could suffer an injury identical to one suffered by a worker in the work place, and return to the playing field within a very short period whilst the worker was off for 6 or 7 months.

Mr Ede: You always knock the worker, don't you?

Mr FIRMIN: In that respect, I certainly do.

Mr Ede: Unsubstantiated rubbish.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr FIRMIN: There is no medical evidence to justify why that should occur, so one can only draw the conclusion that economic thrust causes it. For example, if an employee has suffered a broken arm, it might take 6 months before he resumes gainful employment whereas the sportsman suffering a similar injury might be playing again within 4 to 5 weeks. Evidence shows that that happens frequently.

Mr Ede: That is spurious.

Mr FIRMIN: That is not spurious. There is ...

Mr Ede: Produce evidence.

Mr FIRMIN: Yes. I have it in my pocket. There is considerable evidence to show that that occurs. I am saying that I believe it has as much to do with financial rewards as it does with rehabilitation.

Mr Ede: That is spurious.

Mr FIRMIN: That is not spurious; it is fact. We now have authority within the bill to control all those aspects. We have assessment by doctors rather than by the courts, and I think that is a most beneficial move.

Some aspects that will facilitate the operation of the Work Health Authority and help the worker will be the provision that a claim must be paid within 7 working days of its being lodged, the statutory provisions to speed

up and handle claims and the new court system. The court system will also accelerate claim handling facilities. It is an informal court system. Representation is not necessary, and the court can gather further information and handle a claim far more speedily than has happened in the past.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the responsibilities of the Work Health Authority as they relate to under-insurance. He suggested that possibly there was an underestimate which would cause a 50% reduction in premiums collected. I think that his figures are incorrect. However, I will concede that there is some under-insurance. The under-insurance mentioned in the Doody Report did not relate to 50%, but I agree that it was a substantial figure. However, quite contrary to what was said by the Leader of the Opposition, the Work Health Authority will now have the opportunity to ensure that under-insurance, and more particularly non-insurance, do not occur. It is a responsibility of the authority to gather and keep information in respect of insurance policies and cancellation or non-renewal must be notified to the authority. This will have a great effect on the non-insurance aspect.

Mr Speaker, those are all the aspects of the bill which I intended to cover. The government's approach to this legislation is a very responsible one. It is an enlightening piece of legislation. With landmark legislation, as with all other legislation, this government is not dogmatic. I think we have shown that time and time again in this Assembly. If it is proved with the passage of time that there are anomalies in the operation of this legislation, the government will address them. I commend the bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I know that the previous speaker stated that it was an enlightening piece of legislation. I am glad that he did not get sufficiently carried away to attempt to claim that it was enlightened.

I refer firstly to his statement about under-insurance. This is the third time that I have spoken on the legislation and I have made this point again and again. I assure him that the Doody Report found that, in the 3-year period 1981-83, the shortfalls were respectively 54.5%, 32.8% and 45.6%. That was one of the most significant facts to come out of the report. One of the major reasons why that occurs is because of the competition that exists between insurers and their desire not to put the employer offside by using the powers that are available to conduct audits of wages. The insurers tend to accept the amounts given as correct figures for total wages paid. The direct result of this is the very substantial shortfalls in collected revenue which have been experienced in the Northern Territory over that 3-year period.

I stated before, and I state again, that I believe that a single insurer is the way to go. I believe that, if properly run, it would allow a much cheaper form of workers' compensation whilst still supplying a substantially higher level of benefits than is proposed under this particular bill. I am very disappointed with the benefit levels provided under this legislation, particularly for low-income workers. I believe that it demonstrates a lack of feeling and lack of commitment to the people who are most in need and who most often have to bear the brunt of work injury.

I believe that this government, by its legislation, is in effect condemning those people to the poorhouse. The previous speaker from the government side stated that that did not really matter because very few people would fall within that category. I do not think that that is good enough. I believe that one could make the same case with regard to most insurance. One could say that most people do not suffer work-related injury and therefore we do not need workers' compensation. Obviously, we are not legislating here for

the majority; we are legislating for the minority, the people who do suffer substantial hurt through injury at work.

I wish to raise once again something that seems to be coming to the forefront from the government benches. I refer to the notion that self-regulation in the construction industry, the mining industry and the cartage of dangerous goods will somehow lead us to a brave new world. Obviously, I am not saying that employers deliberately set out to harm their workers. That would be patently ridiculous and to suggest that I have said that could only be dreamed up in the mind of the Minister for Mines and Energy.

In a society like ours, which is developing at a rapid rate, there is always the temptation - particularly when we have a shortage of inspectorial staff and are still developing our legislative forms - to take short cuts, whilst the workers themselves, moving away from their traditional places of work and coming up to the Northern Territory, will be prepared to accept a lower standard in respect of equipment such as helmets, work boots and protective clothing which can help to prevent accidents. That is occurring in the Northern Territory and supports the argument that government, unions and employers should play their part in ensuring that the safety of workers is looked after in the Northern Territory.

It is not enough for us to continue to say that self-regulation is okay. We cannot lump the whole matter of inspection under the responsibility of the Department of Mines and Energy and somehow believe that, even though we cut its staff and its budget, the slack will be taken up via self-regulation and everything will be all right. That is ridiculous. Given the loss of common law and the lack of balance provided in the bill, the idea that somehow this legislation will look after low-income people who are affected by accidents in the work place is, I would submit, a joke.

I am also most disappointed that, even though I have propounded time and time again the needs of rural workers, particularly workers in the pastoral industry, my words seem to have fallen upon completely deaf ears. It seems that the government lacks either the interest or the necessary nous to find a means of assisting people in the pastoral industry. That industry is categorised by a very high level of work-related accidents among young people in the 30 to 35 age bracket who have to move out of the industry because the accidents that they have suffered make them unable to continue in the work which is their whole lives. Often, they find that they cannot find comparable work on the station and have to move into towns to take on jobs that they never thought they would have to do.

Coupled with the high accident rate is a very low payout figure for the accidents. That was established in the Doody Report. In fact, it found it very difficult to obtain accident statistics in the pastoral industry. You have only to talk to any doctor who looks after people who work in the pastoral industry, whether it is in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek or Katherine, to find that they treat a high proportion of back injuries. You will often find people in their 40s and 50s who have such substantially crippling injuries that they are almost totally and permanently incapacitated. I argued that there was a particular problem of lack of notification in this industry, because peer pressure mitigates against the early submission of claims which would allow people to use their entitlements under this act. The changes to the act will make no difference to that, and people in the pastoral industry will still be at a substantial disadvantage.

I am very sorry that the government did not even attempt to take on my proposal that health workers in the industry should make parallel notifications of injuries to the Work Health Authority. The authority would then be able to request the employer to advise on the injury, and that would ensure that notifications from employers were occurring. That was a particular need, and I hoped that the government would address it. Unfortunately, it did not.

There is another point I want to follow up which is now unclear to me, possibly because this is the third version of this bill and I have lost track of it among the numerous amendments we have seen. However, I am still not certain that the relationship between workers' compensation and third party insurance under the Motor Vehicles Act is satisfactory. I was talking to a taxi driver the other day who stated that his group paid some \$20 000 last year in workers' compensation. Fair enough. They have 9 taxis and about 26 drivers, some of whom are full-time and some of whom are part-time. He advised me of a recent case where a mobile crane at Jabiru had knocked a brick off a wall. The falling brick had injured the foot of a worker and a workers' compensation claim ensued. When it came to court, it was established that the claim should have been made under the third party provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act because a motor vehicle had caused the accident. The taxi driver's point was that the most dangerous aspect of his industry is an accident. In that case, the passenger is covered by third party insurance, but the driver is not. He was saying that, because the driver has to pay for both third party and workers' compensation insurance, he has to cough up twice. Is this the case? Perhaps the minister can clarify this in his reply. How is that situation covered? Is it possible to have a clear distinction which would save people from having to double insure or is there possibly a category which might allow such situations not to be covered under either act?

We are not opposing this bill. The main reason is that it has been around for so long that we feel it should become law. However, we are most urgently requesting the government to take note of the points we have raised and to continue to review the legislation and to introduce amendments at the next sittings to deal with our concerns. Alternatively, we have some draft amendments which the government could take up as we proceed through the bill.

It is not enough for the government to say it has consulted with this group and that group. I can consult with 95 people but that does not necessarily mean that I am any the wiser at the end of that process. This government has fallen right into that trap. It says it has consulted with various groups, and I know some of those groups have made points similar to the ones I have just been making, just as I made them at the start of this whole process with the Doody Report. Nevertheless, the government has not taken any notice. It is not enough to say consultation has occurred. The points that I have made have not been taken up by the government. I hope that it will quickly realise the error of its ways and accept some of our amendments.

Mr Harris: You are right and we are wrong.

Mr EDE: We are right and you are wrong, as you so clearly put it. I think that admission on your part tells the story fully.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Work Health Bill.

I have followed with considerable interest the progress of the government's efforts to upgrade and restructure the Workers' Compensation Act through the Doody Inquiry and the large number of other consultations. Consultation has indeed been the key word and no group which has made any reasonable effort can claim to have been ignored. The final policy on work health is, of course, a government decision. The government has reached it after much deliberation.

The principles of work health are modern and innovative. Firstly, there is the principle of prevention of accident and the maintenance of safety. One can only agree that prevention is the most productive method of lowering the cost of insurance as well as being in the best interests of employers, employees and families. Safe work practices are in the interests of everybody. Total awareness and combined responsibility are keys to this bill. I can only hope that common sense and cooperation through self-regulation will be far more in evidence than the threats of penalties which the bill contains, as it no doubt must, to cover the occasional unhelpful employer who does not care about safety.

The second principle is that of rehabilitation. Every effort and incentive is made to get the injured person back to health and to work. If permanent injury occurs, the aim is to find suitable work for the period and to make life as normal as possible for the injured person. These are laudable objectives.

The huge lump sum payments that may, and I repeat 'may', be payable under common law claims - there is no certainty that a claim will be successful - work against the rehabilitation of employees and their return to work. They act as a disincentive for an injured employee to rehabilitate himself and become a productive member of society again. The more disabled a person appears to be after stabilisation of the medical condition, the greater the chance of gaining a huge common law lump sum payment. The temptation of a million dollar payment would militate against people seeking the degree of rehabilitation that they would if such a provision were not available. No doubt anybody having received a large payment of that kind would be rather hopeful that a Lourdes miracle cure could be obtained so the benefit provided could be enjoyed to the full.

Obviously, the scrapping of common law does not please either the left or right wing members of the legal profession because it is quite true that legal fees increase with drawn-out and contentious cases. One is tempted to say that lawyers prefer contentious cases because it is in their interest to have cases go long and hard in that the payments that they receive will be greater. That is a fact of life and there is no getting around it. Of course, another bad effect of a long drawn-out case is that the injured parties have to wait a long time before receiving the financial help prescribed, often leaving themselves and their families in straitened circumstances.

Another principle of the Work Health Act is the speedy resolution of disputes so that payment can be made quickly under the principle of compensation. The compensation principle here has 3 parts: it specifies that the benefits should be equitable and be guaranteed or as certain as possible; that the system for delivering the benefits should not be costly, and we know that under common law both medical and legal costs can be huge; and that all employers should contribute according to the likely payouts which they may incur. Of course, that has been highlighted by the Doody Report and mentioned by other members. I think 46.7% was the average percentage of under-insurance or non-insurance, the percentage of premiums that could and should have been



paid in the Territory. It is certainly a very substantial amount. If we have a mechanism to ensure that all employers contribute as they should, then premiums could fall. Conversely, the benefits could rise with experience with the Work Health Act. As the years roll by, it is to be hoped that we will receive all the actuarial information we need to be able to look at the possibility of reducing premiums, which would be to the employers' advantage, and increasing benefits. Overall, the system should balance the interests of the employers and workers fairly. I dare say there will never be complete agreement. The employers will have their point of view and the workers and the unions no doubt will have theirs.

To digress for a moment, the Leader of the Opposition said that it is a universally accepted principle that the employer must pay, if I recall his words correctly. Why should it necessarily be the employer who has to pay for the insurance? It might prove beneficial and bring home to workers the need for care if they made even a small contribution towards the insurance. They have the benefit of a job and, of course, the cost of insurance adds to the cost of employing people. There is far too much unemployment in Australia today and I am sure that there would be people who, in order to obtain a place in the work force, would not be backward in saying that they would be prepared to contribute towards insurance. I do not think anything is necessarily universally acceptable these days; there are no sacred cows in the employment area and nothing should be beyond examination and reappraisal.

I do not accept the Leader of the Opposition's belief that this is a universally accepted thing. I think it could well be questioned. Members opposite spoke of people living below the poverty line. Maybe those people, and others as well could take out secondary insurance as employees concerned about the nature of their work and the dangers attached to it. I know that extra insurance cover can be obtained for certain situations where there is a reduction in actual benefits as one gets older and one's family responsibilities decrease. A fairly high level of cover is provided in the early years while the family is young and this decreases gradually, although the premiums each year may remain the same. These matters of responsibility should not be thrust at the employer without any care or consideration.

Another principle is that the system of work health must produce information to allow monitoring, cost containment and evaluation. This is important. We know from the Doody Report that the record in these areas was very poor. There was nothing that could be relied upon from which to judge how much money should have gone into the system and what the levels of premiums and payments should have been. The system of work health will allow for that.

Above all, the system must be one which society can afford. The member for Ludmilla gave some excellent examples - Canada, New Zealand, New South Wales and Victoria - where workers' compensation schemes have led to huge debts, generally taken on by monopoly government insurers. Of course, that means that the dear old taxpayer has to put his hand in his pocket to cover the losses. We have to be realistic. I dare say that the basic principle of insurance is simply to spread the cost of injury. One would hope that many firms would never have a claim or have only very minor claims. But one large claim on a small firm could break that firm, and the point of insurance is simply to spread the load. That is what the government is trying to do, without having administrative costs which are so high that they take up a large amount of the money raised.

There are many aspects of the bill before us which one could talk about at considerable length. I have gone over the basic principles and the things which the government is aiming to do. We could talk of the benefits and how one gets down to the nitty gritty of turning principle into practice, but that has basically been done by other members and I will not take up the Assembly's time by repeating it.

The act will need to be widely advertised to the public. Its ramifications will affect every worker and employer in the Territory, and people will need to be informed of what their rights and responsibilities are and the reasons for them. I support the principle that we make an all-out effort to encourage employers and employees to take a very responsible attitude towards the prevention of injury. I know the bill says some fairly firm things about the rights of an employee who points out to a boss that a particular work practice may be unsafe. The bill has to cover these cases. One would hope, however, that in this enlightened age of cooperation, the boss would say: 'Thank you for pointing that out. We will do something about it straight away'. That is the way it has to be and should be. Of course, the worker has a responsibility to other workers and his boss to be careful and to prevent accidents. As I said initially, that is the key point.

The bill has been around for nearly 2 years in various forms. Discussions have gone on for a long time and it is timely that the bill has now been introduced. The effects of the legislation will be monitored by various bodies and the minister will be advised of problem areas as they arise. This government has never been backward in saying: 'We cannot be absolutely sure how a bill will operate. We will take on board any problems that arise and we will introduce amendments from time to time to make the legislation more workable, more equitable and, above all, more affordable'. I support the bill.

Debate adjourned.

TERRITORY INSURANCE OFFICE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 220)

Continued from page 1074.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, very briefly, I thank honourable members for their comments. I note the comments of the Leader of the Opposition. The amendment is mainly designed to allow for the TIO to accept approved deposits. However, it is not the intention of the government to expand the financial arms or services of the TIO at this stage. I will not be moving in that direction under the terms of these amendments. If the Northern Territory government moves in that direction in future, this Assembly will be notified. It will remain a discretionary power of mine but, given the past performance of the government with TIO, honourable members should be able to feel comfortable that any such move by the government would certainly be a matter for public comment and this Assembly would be advised accordingly.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendments agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stage without debate.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I rise this evening to place on record some information with respect to a person who lived in my electorate and who died on 15 September 1986. I refer to Edward Francis Cubillo, warmly remembered by his family as Eddie.

Eddie was born in 1911 in Darwin. He was one of 10 children, 6 boys and 4 girls. There are 1 brother and 3 sisters still surviving. His widow, Rose, survives him. They wed in 1934 and were happily married for some 52 years. They had 4 sons of whom 3 are still alive. His son, John, died 2 years ago, coincidentally on a date within 2 days of the date of his father's death. They have 3 daughters, 23 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.

Eddie attended St Mary's Convent, left school at 14 years of age and worked at Vestey's Meatworks, up near the Darwin High School. Later, he installed most of the oil tanks around Darwin and worked on the wharf from 1940 until 1973. Unfortunately, Eddie had been an invalid since 1973. Even so, he remained a keen fisherman. As with most of the Cubillos, his sports interests revolved around the football codes and he was closely involved in football with Buffs and Wanderers. He also was a life member of the St Mary's Football Club. He was pretty catholic in his involvements with sport over the years. His father was a Filipino pearl diver who married Lily, a part-Aboriginal girl. Rose's father was a Chinese fisherman who married a full-blood Aboriginal girl in Darwin. I understand that Rose is actually a traditional owner of the part of Wagait that is not under dispute.

In the adjournment debate tonight, I would like to touch on several matters. One relates to parking, particularly in the Darwin CBD area and at a venue which attracts a considerable number of tourists: the Beaufort Hotel. I have been attending conferences and functions at the Beaufort Hotel ever since it opened. Until recently, I had no difficulty finding parking space in the area because of the adequate provision of underground parking which was provided for under the Town Planning Act when that company received its approval for the building of the Beaufort Hotel. However, those members who have attended the Beaufort Hotel recently may have encountered the 2 Cincinatti boom gates within the car park confines which require a dollar coin to permit entry to the parking area underneath the hotel. That makes it very difficult for most people going to a tourist hotel, as one does not normally carry numerous dollar coins in one's pocket. I have been caught short on 2 occasions recently and have not had the necessary coin to place in the parking meter. As a result, I have had to seek a place to park outside. I am sure that that has happened to other members recently also.

Several members were at the Beaufort Hotel recently for a housing conference that was extremely well attended. The minister invited a large number of people to attend that conference last week. About 100 people attended and I think the majority found, as I did, that they did not have coins to enter the underground car park, and parked on the Esplanade, on that piece of gravelled no-man's land alongside the kerb. When they left the premises later in the day, they found on their vehicles not only a notice from the Darwin City Council saying that parking there contravenes the bylaws, but that some enterprising parking inspector had seen the notices, read them and thought it a good idea to issue parking tickets on some of the vehicles. It amazes me that we have indented, off-street parking all the way down the

Esplanade in front of all the major tourist hotels except the Beaufort. I refer particularly to indented car parking on the Esplanade in front of the Travelodge Hotel, the Cherry Blossom Motel, right down past the Hotel Darwin and the government buildings. In fact, the only place on the Esplanade that does not have indented car parking is that section in front of the Beaufort Hotel even though it is the place that seems to have the greatest requirement for off-street parking. As a result, people park on what is regarded in local government bylaws as a footpath. The penalty for illegal usage of that road reserve, as is pointed out in the council notice, is a fine of \$30.

I think it would be appropriate for the city council to look very closely at providing off-street parking on the Esplanade in the form of indented parking in front of the Beaufort. The council might also check the provisions of the Town Planning Act in respect of the approvals to build the Beaufort Hotel and see what was said in relation to the provision of free parking on site.

I also want to speak this evening about vandalism, including grafitti. In my electorate recently, I was extremely disturbed to see what I believe to be 2 acts of wanton and blatant vandalism carried out for no reason at all. I refer to the bus shelter that was so admirably painted, with the expenditure of a great deal of time and effort over the school holidays, by children of the Ludmilla Primary School. To my mind, that was probably one of the most attractive attempts at tidying up a concrete bus shelter in Darwin. It used the theme of their mid-term school holiday play, 'The Cocky of Bungaree'. Unfortunately, some mindless fool has painted all sorts of grafitti over that bus shelter. I hope whoever did that is caught.

The other incident of vandalism may not be as significant to people from outside the area, but it is to me and people who live there. I refer to the old council depot site at the turn-off from Bagot Road into the Stuart Highway, going toward Winnellie. The old council depot was removed and the site was planted with some mature palms and other trees. Recently, some 20 trees were snapped off about 6 feet from the ground or bent over and broken at ground level. I think this sort of mindless attack on our attempt to beautify Darwin is just damned stupid, Mr Speaker.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, this morning in question time, the Chief Minister and the Minister for Conservation misled the Assembly. They did so in a way so categorical that it cannot be denied. I am not suggesting that they did so maliciously or deliberately. If I thought that, I would be raising it by way of a censure motion. In both cases, they did so out of simple ignorance, continuing the display of their profound ignorance of matters related to Kakadu National Park which began with the debate they themselves initiated in the Legislative Assembly last week.

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member is using offensive and unbecoming words to describe members of this Assembly. I refer to the phrase 'profound ignorance' applied to members on this side of the Assembly.

Mr B. COLLINS: Not at all. Mr Speaker, may I address the point of order?

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member may address the point of order.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, as the honourable member knows full well, the word 'ignorance' is not at all unparliamentary. I am using the word in its normal Oxford English Dictionary definition, meaning 'not being in possession of the facts'.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I am sorry that the Minister for Conservation and his studious and never-absent colleague, the Minister for Community Development, are absent from the Assembly at this time. No doubt, they are chomping their way through the last 2 pieces of cheese in the members' lounge.

The member for Koolpinyah addressed a question to the Minister for Conservation who is the minister responsible for this matter. The member asked if the minister was 'aware of claims by the member for Arafura that the video produced by the Northern Territory government in support of its submission to the World Heritage Committee is a deception' - a strong word - 'in that at least part of it was filmed within the Kapalga experimental area?' The minister replied categorically: 'Mr Speaker, the only person who is being deceived in this case is the member for Arafura'. He went on to say: 'It is true that the helicopter used to collect evidence for the Territory government's submission to the World Heritage Committee in Paris did fly over Kapalga, but it is quite untrue to say that buffalo were filmed there. There is just no way that the Kapalga area was filmed as part of the government's evidence'. He further went on to say: 'I think it is quite a joke that the member for Arafura has raised this issue', adding that the member for Arafura 'should be ashamed of himself'.

What I was supposed to be ashamed of was what I said in an interview on ABC radio this morning. I said that I would need to see the video to reassure myself that film had not been taken at Kapalga, following information given to me that the government's film team had been seen flying low passes over the buffalo herds at Kapalga. I might add that this was in the northern section of Kapalga which is the only section that contains buffalo.

The Minister for Conservation quite categorically denied that this had happened. The Chief Minister subsequently contributed to the debate in question time, saying:

Mr Speaker, while I am on my feet on the subject of the video, there have been allegations in yesterday's Northern Territory News, and I understand the member for Arafura this morning on radio made some allegations that filming for the video took place over the CSIRO buffalo experimental area. This has been a matter of some moment to us. Quite clearly, the intention was to show Kakadu stage 2, not some CSIRO experiment. I have had it subsequently confirmed that the filming did not take place anywhere near the vicinity of the CSIRO area and it is a shame, Mr Speaker, that people making these allegations do not check the facts with the people making the films.

He then went on to say that his department was preparing a map to show exactly which areas were filmed and that he would be happy to make that map available to members of the Assembly to remove any doubts whatever about the location of the filming. The Chief Minister subsequently did make that map available to me. The map was issued almost on the heels of his telling the Assembly that filming, and I quote him again, 'did not take place anywhere near the CSIRO area'. The map demonstrated that that statement was absolutely untrue. The map clearly shows that a substantial part of the filming took place directly over the section of Kapalga which contains the CSIRO herd of experimental buffalo.

The CSIRO research area is known as Kapalga, which is derived from an Aboriginal word which denotes the entire area between the 2 Alligator Rivers. The CSIRO area has the Arnhem Highway as its southern boundary, the South Alligator River as its eastern boundary and the West Alligator River as its western boundary. It extends as far north as the vicinity of Mount Hooper, an area known as the Causeway. CSIRO actually maintains a road which runs from the Arnhem Highway through its experimental area to the coast. It has never been gazetted because CSIRO regards it as its own road. Roughly across the middle of that area runs a fence which was erected by CSIRO at a cost of \$80 000. It is not a boundary fence for the area and that is where the problem lay in the minister's answer in the Assembly this morning when he said that all the filming was done 'outside the fence'. That statement puzzled me. The fence is not a boundary fence for the research area. It is in fact the experimental heavy-duty fence that divides the controller's area, which has been marked 'CSIRO area' on the Chief Minister's map, from the uncontrolled area which contains the buffalo. The southern area which the Chief Minister referred to is the controlled area, which has had all buffalo removed from it.

The Chief Minister's map shows 2 significant filming locations. These locations directly relate to the CSIRO experiment with buffalo. The buffalo occupy approximately half of the 400 km<sup>2</sup> area depicted on the map. For the benefit of the Chief Minister, I will just read a description of the CSIRO experimental area published in the CSIRO in-house magazine, ECOS, issue 44, 1985:

In 1976, the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Range Lands Research secured a 700 km<sup>2</sup> range lands research area at Kapalga, 160 km east of Darwin. Studies there on the workings of tropical ecosystems include work on the environmental repercussions of feral buffalo activity and have encompassed surveys of vegetation, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, buffalo population counts and buffalo feeding and water intake experiments ... Over the past few years the CSIRO researchers have set up an exclusion trial at Kapalga, inside a 350 km<sup>2</sup> fenced section.

That is the southern section depicted on the Chief Minister's map.

Buffalo have been systematically removed since 1982, leaving an area that is virtually free of the animals. Now researchers are assessing the process of recovery of plants and wildlife inside the fence, comparing the fenced area country with an equivalent area still inhabited by buffalo.

That is the area on the Chief Minister's map north of the fence line where 2 segments of filming occurred; that is, the filming directly involved the CSIRO experiment which the Chief Minister this morning assured us the film makers went nowhere near.

Mr Speaker, can I tell the Assembly, just in passing, that some of the photographic evidence that is now available - and I commend it to honourable members - indicates that the degree of recovery in the control area marked on the Chief Minister's map as 'CSIRO area' as distinct from the northern area, is nothing short of spectacular in terms of the regeneration of the country.

The Chief Minister, the Minister for Conservation and the government generally have made a considerable fuss about this matter. They raised it as the first substantive item of business during these sittings of the Assembly. They have sent a Queen's Counsel to Paris at not inconsiderable expense, with

a video. Tom Hughes is an erudite man, but I am not sure how profound his knowledge of Kapalga is - a lot better than the government's, I hope. They have sent the Deputy Chief Minister to Paris also. I think it is not unreasonable to condemn both of the responsible ministers for their profound ignorance of what in fact is happening in Kakadu National Park where the CSIRO research is taking place. It causes me considerable disquiet that, if they proceed on this current course of ignorance, they will make fools of themselves in Paris. I tried to make some diplomatic efforts to assist them, but these fell on stony ground.

As a member of this Assembly who has considerable knowledge of that area, I got nowhere with that effort. I have heard today from journalists that the government has been running around admitting it has made an error, describing it as an honest mistake. I am prepared to concede that it did not deliberately or maliciously mislead the Assembly. It was done because of a profound ignorance of what is going on out there. Nevertheless, we were misled by both ministers.

The problem is that the video which has gone to Paris indubitably contains scenes that involve the CSIRO research herd of buffalo, as I suspected might be the case. There is a problem with that. Not only is that research completely within the criteria of the World Heritage List for areas of significance but, interestingly enough, UNESCO is partially funding research on the buffalo in Kapalga in the Kakadu National Park. It has been funding it from 1982 to 1985 as part of its 'Man in the Biosphere' program.

So what is going to happen if they show that film in Paris as evidence for their case? The people putting the federal government case will say: 'That is very interesting indeed. Those scenes depict research which is being conducted within the criteria for the World Heritage List which is being partly funded by UNESCO itself'. No doubt ANPWS will be able to produce, as evidence supporting its own case, this Hansard and its references to the Chief Minister's map which categorically prove that the CSIRO experimental herd was filmed. I would suggest to the Chief Minister that, if the video is used as evidence against a World Heritage listing, considering that UNESCO has funded research in one of the areas that was filmed, the Northern Territory government will make a profound fool of itself.

Mr Speaker, I do not think it is unreasonable to ask that both the Chief Minister and the Minister for Conservation to apologise to the Assembly for misleading it, albeit unintentionally, and to assert that they were misled themselves by the information they received and that, in fact, the map provided this morning does show that the CSIRO area was part of the filming for the video. I can put it no stronger than that because, as I said to the ministerial assistant to whom I spoke, the only comment that I would make about the video is that it is such a scrappy production that it is very difficult, because of its lack of cohesiveness ...

Mr Hatton: Have you seen it?

Mr B. COLLINS: I have seen it, Mr Speaker. Because of its lack of cohesiveness, it is difficult to properly identify the message that it is trying to put across. The fact is that the evidence that went with our expensive delegation to Paris is not the evidence that the Chief Minister led this Assembly to believe this morning would be taken to Paris. I ask the Chief Minister to proffer the Assembly the apology that he owes it for misleading it. I would ask, not unreasonably, that the Minister for Conservation proffer the same apology since he has absolutely no excuse for his ignorance on this matter.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a few points. On the map of the Kakadu stage 2 area which I have with me, I can identify the West Alligator River, the South Alligator River and the Arnhem Highway. I am not certain how far the area we are talking about extends to the north.

Mr B. Collins: The herd goes to the coast.

Mr HATTON: I am advised, by way of interjection, that the herd goes right through to the coast in this so-called experimental area.

Mr Speaker, a couple of points arise. Firstly, the honourable member made great play of the fact that this is UNESCO-funded research.

Mr B. Collins: I said partly funded.

Mr HATTON: Be that as it may, I make the point that UNESCO funds many things other than areas which are classified or being considered for classification on the World Heritage List. I ask honourable members to reflect upon what a World Heritage area is supposed to be. It is something of such importance to the world that it needs to be protected by a special international treaty.

I admit that, if what the member for Arafura said is true, I made an honest mistake. My mistake was in assuming that the area of Kapalga shown on the map as the fenced CSIRO area would be a controlled area where trials on the effects of buffalo are conducted. What we find is that something like a quarter or perhaps a fifth of Kakadu stage 2 is contained within this trial area. It is quite a significant area extending from the Arnhem Highway right through to the coast, taking in the West Alligator and the South Alligator Rivers. We are told that, in at least two-thirds of that area, buffalo are allowed to roam free and to create whatever degradation they desire. This is so that people can measure the extent of recovery of land which does not contain buffalo. The area to the north of this so-called CSIRO area, where buffalo are allowed to wander freely, is part of the area that is proposed by the federal government as suitable for World Heritage listing. As such, it can be accurately described as being in a degraded state.

I might say that the member gave rather a shorthand description of the particular locations where filming occurred. I refer to the map that I have in front of me. I know it is difficult to give a particular visual image when describing a map, but this is the map I gave to the member for Arafura and of which he took copies. It shows the area west of the Wildman River where filming occurred. The filmed area surrounds the mouth and extends some distance down river. In fact, filming took place along most of the north-western boundary of the park, right up to the mouth of the Wildman River and westwards to the West Alligator River. There was certainly filming in the far north of the region which the member for Arafura has said is part of the CSIRO buffalo experimental area, and also in most of the area to the eastern side of the South Alligator River and around its mouth. According to this map, there is another location where filming took place, and this was to the far east of the Kakadu stage 2 area, around the Magela Creek system.

Mr Speaker, a number of points arise. Firstly, I am not going to dispute, without clear evidence, what the member for Arafura has said about the locations. They are in his electorate and I work on the assumption that he knows the area and what he is describing is correct. That does not obliterate the fact that a significant proportion of Kakadu stage 2 is being consciously subjected - with the financial support of UNESCO according to the member for



Arafura - to continuing degradation by free-roaming buffalo. This is in the middle of what is a national park. That, in itself, shows an irresponsible attitude to the reclamation of a park.

Mr Speaker, if a conservation organisation wishes to measure the level of degradation or the rate of recovery of an area within a national park, it would seem to me that the first thing it should do is remove feral stock from the area and conduct its experiments elsewhere. We know that this particular area is not unique in the Northern Territory. In fact, it is not unique among wetland areas on the north coast of Australia. It is quite possible to find areas where similar experimentation could have been carried out. CSIRO has chosen to carry out the work inside the park and I do not dispute that it is taking place.

The point that we have always made in relation to Kakadu stage 2 is that we question the intrinsic uniqueness of this particular area within Australia and we question whether the area is appropriate for World Heritage listing. Our specific application to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee submits that this area not be listed until proper and full examinations, as required under the procedures of UNESCO, have been carried out. Our submission is that it should not avoid its own rules of investigation and determination. If, under those rules, the area is proven to be justified for World Heritage listing, we will change our view. It is our view at the moment that this area does not meet the criteria.

The film ranges over one quarter of the area. If the member for Arafura has seen it, he will agree that it shows not only buffalo. I presume he decided to avoid mentioning the horses ...

Mr B. Collins: No, I ran out of time. You want to give me ...

Mr HATTON: ... roaming free across the area. He ignored reference to the degradation caused by feral pigs. The film illustrates visually the area for which World Heritage listing is being sought. Buffalo destroy sand dunes, allowing salt water intrusion and the consequent destruction of flora and the creation of wallows and general erosion. If that is being allowed to happen in the park, with the support of UNESCO, CSIRO and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, that hardly justifies its listing as a World Heritage area. Quite frankly, if that sort of activity is taking place in the park, I see no objection to its being filmed.

Mr Speaker, I am prepared to argue ...

Mr B. Collins: That is not the point, is it?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, that is what the film is all about. And the honourable member for Arafura ...

Mr B. Collins: You misled the Assembly.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I must answer that particular interjection.

The point I made at the very beginning of my remarks was that, if the honourable member for Arafura is correct, I would apologise to the Assembly for having had the audacity to believe that CSIRO would have contained any experimentation and degradation to a small area of the park. I would also apologise if I misled the Assembly by conveying to it the advice I received which was that the area where experimentation was occurring was to the south of the fence line.

Mr Speaker, I apologise if in any way that has misled the Assembly, but I make the point that it does not detract from the fundamental point that we are making so far as Kakadu stage 2 is concerned. Nor does it detract from the importance of having visual evidence of the region which the Australian government is asking UNESCO to classify. The federal government is suggesting that the defined procedures, checks and independent research normally used by UNESCO, and the procedures of the Council of Nature Conservation Ministers, should be cast asunder in the case of Kakadu stage 2. Nothing which has been said detracts from that fundamental point. We ask principally that this area be subject to proper examination according to the procedures of UNESCO.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart has too much sand in his gut to think clearly. The simple ...

Mr Ede: It is better than what you have in your head.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart ought to think more carefully before he opens his mouth.

Mr Ede: It sounds as if you should too. You opened your mouth this morning and shoved your foot in it, and you are doing it again now.

Mr Smith: Sit down while you are not too far behind.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I make the point that that video covers the area specifically proposed for listing. Our argument stands. The video was not designed as a television production but to convey a message of a scientific nature concerning the area. It is a means of saying to the UNESCO panel: 'Be careful about what is being put to you. Do the job properly before you accept the arguments of the Australian government, which is saying that you should take its word on trust that the area really deserves listing'. We are saying to UNESCO: 'Do not take it at its word; check first'.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I would like first of all to direct some adverse comment towards the behaviour of certain public servants who appear so negligent in their duties that they use most of their time to indulge their prurient interest in the sexual characteristics of members of the human race to the detriment of young people placed in their care. In case any member is becoming worried, I am not referring to any public servants in the Northern Territory. I refer to certain public servants in Western Australia; certain teachers in government schools in Western Australia, and also to an article that appeared in The Australian a couple of months ago.

The report in The Australian referred to a motion passed at the conference of the State School Teachers Union and presented to the Equal Opportunities Commission, that urinals in boys toilets should be done away with. I think all honourable members here regard the Equal Opportunities Commission's views sensibly. I cannot say the same for these teachers. I believe they should have been more concerned with the proper education of the children in their care. To his credit, the Western Australian Minister for Health's comment was 'bloody ridiculous' and I heartily concur with it.

If this matter were not so serious, it could be ludicrously amusing, and I use that adjective advisedly. When the content of the motion is considered, it is almost irresistible to draw a comparison with the pissoir in the story 'Clochemerle'. If the motion were successful, we could see little boys made

to wear frilly knickers instead of Y-fronts. However, in the interests of good taste I will not continue.

The subject may appear amusing but it is very serious. It is dangerous, in the interest of true equality, to try to negate sexual differences. They are there whether people like it or not, and whether these teachers like it or not. I am amazed that honourable members who, with the exception of myself, are all male, do not realise how their sex is being insidiously downgraded in so many ways and that the incident I have referred to is one of those.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation. The member for Koolpinyah will be heard in silence.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

This is a very important subject. It is becoming increasingly apparent that anything typically male is considered to be no good and anything typically female is all right. I am speaking as a woman myself and I am being more than fair. Inequality between the sexes will always occur. I have been a victim of it and I know many other females who have been victims. One never knows for sure, but there are always grave suspicions. It will always occur and legislation will not eradicate it. Inequality will always exist between people on any level and in any calling. People are simply not all equal. I believe inequality works to the detriment of men in some cases, especially in family law practices. Recently, I attended a male strip show. A woman can go to female strip shows, but men could not go to the male strip show that I attended with my daughters.

In some respects, inequality works to the detriment of non-Aboriginals in the community. It exists in relation to the direction of federal funding, health services, education services and the availability of loans, to name a few examples. Inequality exists in the community whether we like it or not. I am pretty philosophical myself and I do not hold rancour when it is directed at me. I just remember and get equal at some time in the future. I usually succeed even if I sometimes have to wait for years.

I point out the fact that the notion of equal opportunities seems to refer only to women. I know for a fact that most of the commissioners and members of equal opportunity boards are women. This in itself points to inequality. There are many cases of women in the work force being taken advantage of by men. I am referring to young girls who are just starting work and women who come back into the work force after being away for a long period. They are the sort of people who are uncertain of their positions. They are usually quiet people who are not very assertive. Perhaps they need the job very badly or cannot shake off early passive social conditioning.

Somewhere, sometime, someone needs to step back and take an overall look at where all these equality-seeking women are going. I will cite an example that was reported in the press a couple of months ago and was possibly on TV. In England, a young girl worked in a supermarket which was part of a large national chain. She wore black stockings to work and was told to change them or get the sack. The same order went out to those young girls who wore yellow stockings. The words 'black' and 'white' were forbidden in that supermarket, which happened to be in a municipality controlled by the Labor Party. Those same words were not allowed to be used in any official publications in that municipality of London.

A friend of mine returned recently from a holiday in England and told me a factual story about a policeman who went to court in the course of his duties. I do not know whether he was in uniform or not, but he was wearing a tie with a badge of some sort on it. It was the badge of a police union or association to which he belonged. The badge depicted a policeman's helmet on a figure which had a yellow vest. The magistrate happened to be a black Indian who assumed, because he could not see very clearly - obviously he was a one-eyed Indian who was also a black Indian - that the badge depicted a golliwog. Why a policeman would wear a golliwog on a badge, I do not know. He sent the policeman from the court and would not listen to any explanation whatsoever.

To carry it further, in those places one cannot be referred to as black or white. By some circumlocution, one is referred to as being of Caribbean of European origin. Do we want to go to the ridiculous length of completely negating interest in other people so that we consider them only as ciphers, as neither male nor female, black nor white, Catholic nor Protestant, graduate nor non-graduate? Should this be carried so far as to completely ignore a person's individuality so that each becomes a dull, completely unnoticeable number or cipher?

I will go on to another incident which I think was reported in the local paper. It took place in Adelaide. The Commissioner for Equal Opportunity there, a female, issued a set of guidelines on the subject of child's play, sport and equality. It was supposed to end discrimination in sport in schools in South Australia, but I believe it only encouraged it further. The booklet put out by the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity urged special programs of coaching and physical fitness in schools to enable girls to compete on equal terms with boys in sport. Surely to goodness, if the girls were equal to the boys, they would be competing in those sports already.

I am not saying that some girls do not want to play boys' sports. One of my daughters was particularly interested in football and used to play it at school in Darwin with the boys. I am not saying that some girls are not good at boys' sports, just as some boys are good at girls' sports but, by and large, each sex plays certain sports which match its physical attributes. There are differences in muscular development between males and females except in the case of those well-known, so-called females who are very well developed because they take massive doses of steroids. They are pretty hard to tell from males and I believe they may act like males in more ways than sport. To conclude, I sincerely hope that our Minister for Education ensures that his teachers concern themselves with the proper teaching of the children in their care, and not the different elimination functions of boys and girls.

In the time remaining to me, I would like to comment on the Mango Harvest Festival that recently occurred in the Humpty Doo area in my electorate. This was not only a Northern Territory first, but an Australian first because there is no such festival anywhere else in Australia. There are other festivals to celebrate different agricultural harvests, but this is the first mango one. It combined 2 events: the Humpty Doo Primary School Fair and the presentation of The Mango. It was interesting, informative, and lighthearted. It not only raised money, but demonstrated the importance of the mango industry to the Top End. This being the first of what I hope are many festivals, it came at an unfortunate time, because this year's mango harvest was very poor. The committee had to contend with a lot of unknowns. The festival was not very successful financially but it was successful socially, especially for the local people. There were many people there. In fact, there were hundreds more at Humpty Doo school than I have seen there on previous occasions, and the festival will certainly be a must next year.

The displays included one by the Rare Fruit Council. I have been up here for a long time and I am interested in agricultural matters, but I was amazed at the number of varieties of mangoes which are actually grown here. I did not count them but there were at least 20 varieties and, in all fairness to the exhibit, there are probably many more. There was a competitive section which I helped to organise. The aim was to present the mango in all sorts of ways: from the culinary point of view, the art point view, the photography point of view and the horticultural point of view. That was very well patronised.

We intended to have mango wine on display but, because of the bad season, it was impossible to make any and there were problems in obtaining it from interstate. However, there was a very interesting mango cocktail available, and it was a pretty interesting drink. There were some mangoes for sale and there was the Mango Games which were anything-goes style adult games in which giant mangoes were features. There were mango trees for sale and, all in all, it was a very successful event to publicise the mango harvest. Although the festival was not financially successful this year, the committee has learnt a lot. I have been on the committee and I believe the second Australian Mango Festival will be a great success.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, it was remiss of me in last Thursday night's adjournment debate not to raise the matter of Territory Tidy Towns and to put on record a few of my thoughts about that, along with my thanks to the people of the Sadadeen area who contributed magnificently towards that competition, as they always do. I offer congratulations to the Batchelor group for its overall win. The competition has grown in strength over the years and it is a little unfortunate that it cannot be witnessed by more people. It is always held here in Darwin, I suppose for financial reasons, and it brings together a very cosmopolitan group from across the Territory to hear the prizewinners announced. It has a very good atmosphere and is something that I have enjoyed over the last half dozen years.

Getting back to the electorate of Sadadeen, I must as always give a great deal of credit to Ashley Meaney and his wife, Jan. For 6 years - as long as the competition has been going - they have been heavily involved in getting the electorates of Alice Springs and Sadadeen mobile and competing. Ashley has always done a great job and it has been a pleasure to be more heavily involved with him this year than ever before.

I would also like to place on record my and Ashley's thanks to my own secretary, Mrs Gail Fry, former employee of the member for Fannie Bay, who acted as our typist and spent many hours doing all sorts of hackwork to coordinate the efforts down there. I must also express my thanks to the Alice Springs Town Council which, this year in particular, bent over backwards to do its part to keep the area clean and tidy; to the Conservation Commission which planted hundreds of new trees and maintained those planted last year; and to a number of private groups around the town, such as the Red Centre Rapids, who have taken over a bare piece of land and really beautified it. That last project may not seem very spectacular from the outside, but those who have gone inside know what a great effort has been made there. It will not be very long before that will be clearly visible to people going past, and they will be able to enjoy a beautiful area and a magnificent facility.

I should also record the committee's thanks to the schools in the area. I do not think there was one school which did not make a first-class effort. The Minister for Education knows of the Sadadeen Primary School's success as the top winner in the KAB Milo competition. Last year, one teacher entered

her class in a section and it won a prize. She was able to convince the whole school that, if everyone put their hands to the pump, they might be able to do great things. They proved that, and it was my delight to be in Darwin at the KAB Milo awards to see the teacher, Mrs Karen Thomas, receive the award. I have never seen a person walking on air so much. We went to dinner and it was just a delight to bask in the reflected glory of her efforts because it was a reward that was well-earned. The whole school contributed - staff, students and parents - and I am sure that their efforts helped promote the Tidy Towns competition among the whole range of schools in the electorate. There are 7 or 8 of them and they were all involved in the competition in one way or another.

I would like also to record my thanks to my wife who is in the music field. She was persuaded to compose a ditty relating to Tidy Towns. It was about a bunyip, rubbish-makers and the emu. I would not be game to sing it for people, but she wrote the words and the music. The Ross Park Junior choir and their teacher, Mrs Caroline Parker, spent many hours rehearsing the ditty and sang it at the Todd River. The performance was filmed by Mr Kevin Hollioake and his helpers from the community college and a couple of local identities, the Todd River Bunyip and the Emu, helped put this video together. Quality of video is an important thing and I hope that, in the future, we will be able to re-video that particular production and produce a recording which would be suitable for a Tidy Towns presentation.

This indicates the level of support which we were able to engender from many different groups in the Sadadeen electorate. Of course, one has to remember that, 3 years ago, at the time of the last election, the Sadadeen electorate was very much a dust bowl, particularly the suburban part. It is a credit to the people and the efforts they have made, which have transformed it into an area in which one can be proud to live. I want to record my thanks to all the people throughout the Sadadeen area for a great effort. We will certainly take on the honourable member for Jingili. We welcome his challenge in a friendly spirit. We will be up there right among the winners again. We have a record of 2 seconds, followed by 3 firsts in the C category for areas with over 3000 people. We intend to improve on that. The member for Victoria River is under challenge too.

Mr McCARTHY (Conservation): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to speak for very long on the matters raised by the member for Arafura, except to say a couple of things. As far as I am aware, the filming of the buffalo in Kakadu stage 2 took place outside the area of Kapalga. I am aware of a statement issued that indicates that there are 12 000 buffalo in Kakadu stage 2 and 2700 in Kakadu stage 1. That statement was in the Plan of Management for Kakadu and the figures were accurate as of December last year. Unless there has been a major removal of buffalo from that area since then, they are undoubtedly spread throughout Kakadu stage 2 and a fair portion of Kakadu stage 1.

The area of Kapalga was defined by the member for Arafura for our benefit. I could be wrong about the area because I was not in the Assembly at the time - I was not eating cheese, incidentally, I was listening. I think he said that the area of Kapalga was about 750 km<sup>2</sup> to 780 km<sup>2</sup>, and that about 350 km<sup>2</sup> of that was in the controlled region to the south. I assume that leaves about 400 km<sup>2</sup> or more in the northern region where there are buffalo. If the 12 000 buffalo mentioned in the Kakadu Plan of Management of December last year are all included in that 400 km<sup>2</sup>, there would be 30 buffalo per square kilometre in the northern part of Kapalga, which is ludicrous. If there are not that many buffalo in the northern part of Kapalga and they are spread throughout Kakadu stage 2, I do not see that it is such a big deal.

There are uncontrolled buffalo throughout vast areas of Kakadu stage 2 and what we have done with the film is indicate the degradation that has occurred there not only from buffalo but also from other feral animals.

The Conservation Commission is renowned for its reading from the air of buffalo and cattle numbers throughout the Northern Territory. In fact, there are a number of areas where there are in excess of 10 animals per square kilometre in Kakadu stage 2. Those 4 areas are Cairncurry Plain north of Munmarlary, Boggy Plain south of Munmarlary near the Alligator River, the eastern Magela floodplains area and, of course, the north Kapalga area, the area of the CSIRO experiments. There are fairly substantial numbers of buffalo throughout stage 2 of the park. If, in fact, we did infringe that area, it is not a big deal. There are also very large pig numbers.

Mr B. Collins: There is no correction on the record.

Mr McCARTHY: I do not intend to correct any record because, as far as I know, we did not enter into the Kapalga area for filming. That is the information I have to hand.

Mr B. Collins: Check that out with the Chief Minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The minister will resume his seat. The member for Arafura has had his chance in the adjournment debate. I ask that he desist from noisy interjections during the minister's speech.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

It is fine for the member for Arafura to get up here in his supercilious manner and tell us that we are all dills. I am quite happy to cop that occasionally but he goes on and on while I am trying to put the story straight. I do not believe that, at any stage, the Chief Minister withdrew his remarks of this morning. He said: 'If, in fact, I am proved to be wrong'. I am convinced that I am not wrong and, if the honourable member can convince me otherwise, I will take my hat off to him.

The problems that we are facing in Kakadu stage 2 are not just problems with buffalo numbers. That was a point raised to indicate that the area of Kakadu stages 1 and 2 was so large that it was almost impossible to control it as a national park. As was indicated this morning, it would be almost impossible to fence it because of the cost of fencing. It will be very difficult to control the area of Kakadu stages 1 and 2. God forgive, if they get away with Kakadu stage 3; it will be totally impossible.

The national conservation strategy for Australia mentions 5 strategic principles for achieving the objectives: integrate conservation and development - he will go now because he does not want to hear this - and emphasise their interdependence and common ground.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will refrain from reflecting on an earlier debate. Matters raised earlier in the adjournment debate have reflected on the misleading of the Assembly during question time. I ask the honourable minister to avoid going over ground which was covered in debates earlier today.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I may be wrong, but I was accused of misleading the Assembly, as was the Chief Minister, and I am answering that accusation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable minister must confine his remarks solely to the question of misleading and details relating thereto.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order relevant to your remarks about addressing the particular matter raised. I would point out that my statement was quite specific, as the Chief Minister recognised very quickly indeed. I will read from the Hansard which accurately records what I said: 'that the Minister for Conservation misled this Assembly this morning when he said, as the responsible minister for this matter, that the government film team had not filmed anywhere within the CSIRO experimental area at Kapalga'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we now know, and the Chief Minister has admitted it and described it as an honest mistake, that that statement was false. Mr Deputy Speaker, that is the point of this debate. I did not allude to previous debates when I made that point and the Minister for Conservation should not do so either.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: What specifically is the point of order?

Mr B. COLLINS: It is that the minister's remarks are not relevant to this debate in that he is alluding to a previous debate in this Assembly about numbers of buffalo in Kakadu National Park. That is not relevant to the issue that I raised. I point out, in passing, that the minister has refused to correct the record at the first opportunity made available to him.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister may address comments pertaining to the question of misleading the Assembly and avoid all other matters relating to earlier business today.

Mr McCARTHY: I stand corrected.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have no evidence before me to indicate that I have misled the Assembly. If information is put before me that proves without doubt that I misled the Assembly, then I will be happy to withdraw my remarks. However, I certainly am not aware of such information at this time. As a consequence, I am reluctant to withdraw at present. Since I cannot talk about the real facts of the matter, I would be remiss if I did not raise the subject of Territory Tidy Towns, and let us hear no more from the opposition.

In the electorate of Victoria River, there were 18 winners of awards in the Territory Tidy Towns competition. I do not intend to go into a great deal of detail about them, but I would just like to read out the names of the successful communities. The Best School Project in Category D was won by Victoria River Downs School; the Special Effort Award went to Timber Creek; the Best Business Project was Kalkaringi Shell Service Station; the Adelaide River Inn won an award; the Best Government Department or Authority was the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory, Southern Region; a Special Effort Award went to Pine Creek Police Station; the Best Service Group or Community Project was won by Newcastle Waters Tidy Towns Committee; Batchelor won Category A for Winning Towns; and Special Effort Awards went to Victoria Valley, Timber Creek, Newcastle Waters, Daly River Mission, Peppimenarti and Kalkaringi.

Mr Ede: And you walked out early. Shame on you.

Mr McCARTHY: I came back.



Category D Special Effort Awards went to Victoria River Downs Station, Scott Creek Station and Tipperary Station; the Best Documented Record of Activity by a Most Improved Town Award for 1986 was won by Peppimenarti; 5 Year Improvement Award went to Timber Creek; and, of course, the overall winner for 1986 was the township of Batchelor. All made a great effort and particular congratulations must go to Batchelor for taking out the main prize.

In my remaining few minutes, I would like to refer briefly to a recent trip to Sabah and Sarawak which I undertook on behalf of the Chief Minister. The trip was a trade mission, mainly for the building trades, and the delegation visited Kucing in Sarawak and Kota Kinabalu in Sabah. A number of Northern Territory businesses were represented. They came from the building trades, planning, model making, engineering, kitchen design and a range of others.

I was able to meet with the Deputy Chief Ministers of each of those states and also the Ministers for Industry and Rural Development. I had discussions with them on a range of issues including buffalo, milk, tourism and a number of other matters of interest to them and to myself. Building was the subject of major discussion because that was the main purpose of our visit. We had the opportunity to visit a number of building areas. In fact, the Malaysian government intends to build 80 000 houses per year for the next 3 years in the states of Malaysia. There are certainly great opportunities for our building expertise there. They have problems in terms of the availability of building materials. Some of our building materials will be of great benefit to them if they are prepared to adopt the expertise available here.

Our buffalo industry was also a matter of interest to the Ministers for Industry and Rural Development. Of course, we have exported buffalo to both Sabah and Sarawak in past years, and there is interest in an ongoing trade. In the area of milk production, they have one dairy farm. Of course we only have 2, but we have a very large one coming on stream soon which will be looking for export markets. There is potential to export fresh milk or at least long-life milk to Sabah, and negotiations will continue on that.

They are also very keen to develop tourist packages which link their states and the Northern Territory. There is great potential to advertise Kota Kinabalu and Ayers Rock in the package because they are both areas of great significance. I believe such a package would be very attractive to the American and European markets.

To return to building, the materials available to them are basically concrete and brick. Although they have timber, they do not use it very much in their building. I think we have considerable expertise to share with them in respect of building with timber because it is a resource that is readily available. In some cases, their gravel for concrete is made from crushed bricks because there is a shortage of gravel there. Sand is often brought in from other islands and housing is very expensive because of the difficulty in obtaining materials.

Engineering expertise is another skill that we can sell to the Malaysians. They certainly need to develop expertise in the principles of engineering and building in wet and muddy areas. Most of their housing is built over the water and many such areas are being filled and built upon to overcome the problem of living in unhealthy locations.

I think there is a great deal of potential for the future development of trade between the Northern Territory and Sabah and Sarawak, and I look forward

to the opportunity to visit those states again and to continue the progress made so far.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I want to make a brief reference to the inability of the Minister for Conservation to stay on top of his portfolio. It is quite clear from the evidence presented to us today by the Chief Minister and the member for Arafura that, in the process of preparing the video which has gone to Paris, filming took place in the Kapalga area. I invite the Minister for Conservation to make himself aware of the information supplied to us by the Chief Minister in the form of a map so that he does not go around embarrassing himself and so that he can do the right thing and apologise for misleading this Assembly this morning.

My prime reason for contributing to the adjournment debate tonight is to respond to some comments which the Minister for Education made last week about the university and university funding. The Minister for Education has been attempting, quite deliberately to do a snow job on Territorians over the Northern Territory government's role in the establishment of a university in the Northern Territory and over the role of the Commonwealth government and the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission.

The fact is that Territorians can and should have a university in the appropriate place. If it is established in the appropriate place, there is no doubt whatsoever that Commonwealth funding will be made available.

Mr Manzie: What sort of funding and when? Tell us.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: The university does not belong to members of the government although we know the only way most of them could get into a university would be to own one. Perhaps that is its attraction.

Mr Speaker, education for Territorians is what we should all be pursuing and by that I mean education in the Territory and not somewhere else. A university is not a collection of ivy-covered buildings; it is a vibrant opportunity for learning and development. In its Mexican stand-off with CTEC and the federal Minister for Education, this government is blatantly denying Territorians that experience and opportunity. I will give some facts on the attitude of CTEC and the Commonwealth government.

The Northern Territory government was told that, if it placed a university campus at DIT, it would receive capital funds. It was told also that recurrent costs per student would be paid. In the rest of Australia, these amount to an average of \$6500 to \$7000 per student per annum. Currently, the DIT receives about \$8000 per student per annum from CTEC. In the submission made by the Northern Territory government to the federal government, it asked for \$24 000 per student. That is \$24 000 for the luxury of placing these students at Myilly Point. That is 4 times the Australian average, and the question has to be asked: is Myilly Point such an elite location that it is worth paying 4 times as much for students to study there than is paid for students anywhere else in Australia?

Mr Manzie: You are totally ignorant, Terry.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: The University of Queensland agreed to run university courses at DIT. It was happy to run university courses at the Darwin Institute of Technology, given that minimum standards were met in terms of the content of the courses and the lecturers who would give them. We all know that there is no problem with that. Surely that is what the object is: to provide the maximum number of university-type courses and university places for students in the Northern Territory.

If we want educational outcomes, snobbery about locations should not stand in our way. It is interesting to look at the reasons why the university site has moved from Palmerston to Darwin Primary School and now to Myilly Point. It is obvious that the government has been casting around for a reason to justify its seizure of Myilly Point. It is trying to convince the electorate that it has high ideals and that we are getting the best deal for Territorians in the shape of a gold-plated, Ivy League up-market university. Mr Speaker, that best deal for Territorians will cost them \$12m.

The government has thumbed its nose at offers of funding that less hidebound governments around Australia are grabbing with gusto from the Commonwealth. Queensland, Tasmania, Western Australia and Victoria are all accessing funding and agreeing to extend their academic offerings with no problems and with the agreement of CTEC. James Cook University is offering degree courses in Cairns. Capricornia, in Queensland, is extending its campus to Mackay. Even poor old Tasmania is extending its university offerings through centres in Burnie and Devonport. Victorians can access university courses at Bairnsdale and Mildura and West Australia is extending university courses to Karratha and Albany. While the rest of Australia seizes these opportunities, this government continues to swim against the tide, to the detriment of our young people's education. The new national model of rationalising resources through existing facilities, while still extending the offering of courses, is sensible in a time of limited funding.

Why is it that the Northern Territory Cabinet insists on maintaining its intractable position? Obviously, it is political grandstanding; nothing more, nothing less. The government is embarrassed and it is a neat solution. It has 2 parcels of land that it does not know what to do with. That land was acquired in the face of an anguished outcry from the public. The government is casting about for creative solutions to its problem now that its high-rolling friends have let it down. This ridiculous proposal for a university provides a use for those sites and offers the government a chance not only to hide its failure but to cover up the scandal and the whole sorry business with some more Canberra-bashing. Very convenient, Mr Speaker.

Canberra's attitude is perfectly reasonable. Why would anyone finance 2 tertiary institutions with 2 sets of facilities, 2 administrative structures, 2 groups of academics and 2 expensive library collections? Why would any responsible government deny our students TEAS by insisting on doing its own unbelievable thing? Yet that is what the Northern Territory government is doing. If members on the other side had been half reasonable, we could have had recurrent funding for equipment, access to capital funds for the university, and TEAS for the students. Further, we could have obtained a greater share of per student placement funding than we did. And who suffers, Mr Speaker? It is the average Territorian who is being denied what every other Australian is receiving and it is due to the dog-in-the-manger attitude of the government. The government's cover is utterly transparent.

And what of DIT? It has everything going for it. It has the facilities, the infrastructure, the staff, the links with the wider education network,

experience with Territory needs and a host of other assets extending well beyond the logical argument about costs and fundings. The federal government is very generous to the Territory because it recognises our education needs.

There is no impediment to a Territory university. There is no reason to continue our youth brain drain to southern educational institutions except the high dudgeon of this government because the Commonwealth will not be conned into helping it to save face with the electorate. Mr Speaker, I ask you why the Commonwealth government should do that when it involves a cost which is 4 times that paid for students in tertiary facilities elsewhere in Australia, not to mention all the extra capital expenditure required to bring the Myilly Point site up to scratch. This is one buck the Commonwealth will not accept. It sits squarely in the lap of the Territory government. People will not take this sort of nonsense from the Northern Territory government any longer. We want a university in the Northern Territory ...

Mr Harris: We want one which has credibility too.

Mr SMITH: That is very easy. We can use the Darwin Institute of Technology and a university in Queensland which is prepared to offer courses through it. The government would say that lacks credibility. That is very interesting. To suit its own purposes, this government is prepared to throw mud at anybody, at any time. It now targets the University of Queensland, which is quite happy to run courses at the Darwin Institute of Technology because it knows it is the sensible thing to do and reflects the way things are going in the rest of Australia. The minister, who would not know a higher degree from a high school certificate, says that that is not good enough. That is typical of the problem and it is the reason this government is missing out on Commonwealth funds which would enable it to provide many more university places and a wider range of courses to be offered to students in the Northern Territory.

Mr MANZIE (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have had to rise to my feet because the Leader of the Opposition has made a speech which shows his absolute and total ignorance. Obviously it was prepared for him by the chairman of CTEC, one Hugh Hudson. It was totally devoid of any facts and did not address any of the problems facing Territory students, nor did it propose any solutions. We were told that we have knocked back capital funds and allowances for students. He gave no figures. The offer of funds for student places at DIT was for 20 next year, with 20 extra in each succeeding year.

The Leader of the Opposition is sick, Mr Deputy Speaker. We are talking about 500 students who are presently down south. We are talking about 1000 matriculants who will be leaving school this year and another 1000 next year. We are talking about a situation in the Territory where the rate at which matriculants attend university is one-third of the national average, a situation where the Territory offers no university places. We cannot provide for our students. The Commonwealth refuses to recognise that, while the puppet over there regurgitates the line of the chairman of CTEC, which says: 'In the Territory, you shall have 20 extra places for a few extra subjects at the Darwin Institute of Technology'.

The Darwin Institute of Technology is an excellent facility which caters for over 8500 students. It is crammed to the limit and has insufficient space now. That clown is telling us ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MANZIE: I withdraw the remark, Mr Deputy Speaker.

That ill-informed person is trying to tell us that we should accept an offer for 20 extra places. I will make sure that the whole of the Territory sees and reads what the Leader of the Opposition has said here tonight because it shows that he does not care about Territory students. It shows he does not care about the future of Territory students and it shows that he does not care about the future of the Territory. It shows that all he wants to do is open his mouth and repeat what people in Canberra tell him to repeat.

I am blown if I know where this business about \$24 000 per student comes from. However, he might like to put this into his pipe and smoke it: we are talking about recurrent costs of \$6m. We already have almost 200 students who will attend the university. If you divide that up, you will find that it works out to \$3000 per student. The cost per student at the ANU is \$17 000. The cost per student depends on how many students you have. I hope he remembers that, for the first 25 years of its existence, Sydney University had no more than 50 students. We will start with many more than that and we will be able to provide 82% of our tertiary requirements after next year when the University College opens. The Darwin Institute of Technology is also expanding and it will be catering for students.

I see that dazed look of amazement on his face. The man is ignorant of the facts. He is ignorant of the needs of the Territory and Territory students and he is totally ignorant of what the Commonwealth has offered. He does not want to know. All he wants to do is repeat the claims of Hugh Hudson. Even the federal minister, Hon Susan Ryan, in conversation with me, agreed that it seemed to be rather strange that CTEC was pushing a proposal which, if all things were equal, would lead to much greater costs on the DIT site. If we supplied the same number of places at DIT next year, the same quality staff and the same research facilities as will be available next February at the hospital site, it would cost us much more than \$6m and more still in the following year. We will not take that route because the DIT is overcrowded now. It is impossible to provide extra facilities at the DIT for next year or the year after.

The Commonwealth is trying to play a game with us. It was saying that it would not provide the administration block at the DIT because it would be silly to provide it if we were thinking about putting the University College somewhere else. When it found out we were proceeding with the University College, it still had to agree to provide the administration block because the existing one is totally inadequate. It was ridiculous to say that the problem would be solved by placing the university there. I am distressed that the Leader of the Opposition has not even examined the requirements of Territory students.

Mr Smith: \$6m divided by 200 is \$30 000.

Mr MANZIE: Well, \$30 000. That is \$30 000 for the first year. The next year, if we have the same number of students - and we are expecting more - it will drop down to \$15 000 and, the year after that, it will drop down to \$10 000.

Mr Leo: What a jerk.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The minister will resume his seat. The member for Nhulunbuy will discontinue his unparliamentary interjections and reflections upon the minister.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the point that I was intending to make in relation to the \$6m and the 200 students is that, by the time those 200 students are in their final year, the number of students at the university will be around 600 and the cost per student will be \$10 000, which will be less than the ANU cost.

Mr Smith: He can't count.

Mr MANZIE: The man just sits back there in his ignorance. If we have 200 students starting next year and 200 the year after, and 200 the year after that ...

Mr Smith: It would be more than \$6m. What about inflation and variable costs?

Mr MANZIE: I do not care what the cost is. We have a responsibility, and and I would like him to try to deny it, to provide maximum educational opportunities for all Territory students. I know you do not agree with that because what you said shows you do not agree with that. You are following a line that will allocate only 20 places a year next year.

Mr Ede: You are supposed to be speaking through the Speaker.

Mr MANZIE: Terry Smith, you know that, because you have spoken ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The minister will direct his remarks through the Chair and address honourable members in the appropriate fashion.

Mr MANZIE: The Leader of the Opposition knows this. He had conversations with the Director of the DIT - and I would like him to deny this - who pointed out the overcrowding at the DIT and the sort of proposals put forward by CTEC in relation to the expansion of tertiary facilities there. I would like him to comment on this in tomorrow's adjournment debate. I want to know why he does not recognise the facts, but regurgitates a Canberra line.

He will regret his knocking of the University College which will provide first-class facilities. Forty international students want to come here, the quality of the staff is first class and, on average, is probably better than that in any institute of equal standing in the country. I am most impressed with the qualifications and the reputation of the staff who have been employed. Believe you me, Mr Deputy Speaker, the education that will be supplied will be first class too.

I am stunned and amazed at what I have heard this afternoon. I am in the middle of preparing quite an in-depth submission to the Commonwealth. I was intending to provide the Leader of the Opposition with all the information in that submission and request his support. However, it is obvious that I would be wasting my time because he is not interested in first-class tertiary education for Territory students. He is interested only in trying to score cheap political points and I find that intolerable.

If he believes that we would spend \$12m in this current political climate if we had other means of providing tertiary education to Territorians, he has another think coming. The fact that we have taken this step and the Commonwealth has refused to carry out its obligations to Territory students shows how serious we consider the matter to be. For that man to be insinuating that there was a better way of doing it and that the Commonwealth would fix everything is total hogwash. It is an insult to the people who are

working on this project, to Territory students who will be going to this institution and to all members in the government. I feel ashamed for him and the stand he is taking. He will regret it.

All I can say is that there are people on this side of government with far more faith in Territorians and the future of the Territory. We will ensure that that university proceeds as it is proceeding. It will open its doors next February and it will provide quality tertiary education for Territorians. In years to come, the Leader of the Opposition will be remembered for the stance he has taken on this matter.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I too hope that I can go down in history as a person who opposed the university and the funding levels associated with it.

The community I come from contains the largest primary school in the Northern Territory. It has 700 students. It is easily twice the size of any other primary school in the Northern Territory, but the best I can get out of this government on education is another high-blown, high-minded useless project which will waste \$6m in recurrent costs and \$6m in capital costs on educating 200 students, 40 of whom the minister has already admitted will not even come from the Northern Territory. If that is logic and if that is serving the good of the Northern Territory, I do not mind going down in history as having opposed the project. To me it is a waste of time, money and effort when our community has much greater educational needs.

I doubt that this minister has ever been to an Aboriginal community and seen the appalling conditions under which students are taught and the appalling conditions under which teachers are housed. No wonder the turnover is so high in those places! Yet he can glibly sit here and say he is going to spend \$12m in the first year of the university on 200 students - that is, if he gets them through the door. The minister is a joke and he should laugh, because that is exactly what he is - a joke, a farce.

I have a few matters to report to the Assembly from my electorate and I am sure all members will be greatly interested in them. The member for Victoria River handed out various accolades to his constituency, and I must tell all members that I am extremely proud and pleased that the Nhulunbuy High School was considered the best-presented high school in the Northern Territory. At least there is one educational institution that is trying to do something. I have been associated with that school for a number of years. Because I have so little time to put into school activities, I must fully congratulate the staff, students and parents on their achievement. The Territory Tidy Towns Committee once again accorded its appreciation for the efforts made by the Nhulunbuy community in presenting itself to the Northern Territory and interstate visitors. If there are any members here who have not been to Nhulunbuy, I invite them to do so because it certainly is a most pleasant part of the Northern Territory.

There is another matter I wanted to pursue with the Minister for Community Development. Unfortunately, he is not here this afternoon. However, I would hope that, before these sittings are over, he could give me the answer to a question I asked this morning. It relates directly to the funding level which the Department of Community Development provides for its community assistance activities. This particular allocation provides emergency accommodation in times of domestic strife and various other community services. Whilst the budget papers show that the allocation was cut by \$16 000, if one calculates the effects of inflation, the cut amounts to \$600 000 in real terms. I asked

the minister this morning if he could inform the Assembly which specific programs would be cut, and by what amounts, so that this targeted reduction of \$600 000 in inflation-adjusted terms could be achieved.

There are many people in isolated areas who have great respect for the services which are provided under those community development programs. I am sure this also applies in less isolated areas, including Darwin, although I am not too sure about the extent to which the services are utilised here. However, I know that, in my own electorate of Nhulunbuy, that division of the Department of Community Development provides a very worthwhile service and, if some sections of it are to be cut or curtailed, my constituents and I would certainly like to know what they are.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like first to raise again a matter that I raised during the adjournment debate last week. It is the question of the water supply at Anningie. At that stage, I went through the various letters I had written to 3 successive ministers on this matter. In each case, I had hoped that something would be done to provide a water supply for that community.

I asked the minister whether he would reverse a decision he had advised me of in a letter: his refusal to honour the commitments of his 2 predecessors and supply water to the community. I have not as yet had the honour of a further reply from the minister. I hope that he is not going to go right through this 3-week sittings without providing me with a reply or at least some justification for his position, which I think he will find very hard to manufacture. I hope that he will not go through this sittings and continue to ignore the plight of the people of Anningie. As you know, Mr Speaker, they are desperately in need of water. I have advised the minister of a means by which it can be provided and I ask him to do something about it.

I would like to elaborate further on a subject I mentioned in my speech last week: the International Year of Water. We are now in the United Nations International Decade of Water. It has been going for 6 years. It was hoped that, during this decade, there would be a substantial amelioration of the problems of delivering good quality, adequate water supplies to people. It is a matter of some shame to me, and I think it would be a matter of national shame to the people of Australia, that we could reach the end of this decade and find that Australia, which is generally considered to be one of the more wealthy countries in the world, has not attained that goal. I make my plea to the government on the basis of simple humanitarianism and people's rights to adequate supplies of good quality water. I could put the argument on another level. I could talk simply in financial terms as if that, more than an argument based upon blindness, death and sickness, would convince a government of this ilk and bend the hearts of its members.

Mr Speaker, as you know, well over 50% of the inmates of Alice Springs Hospital at any one time are people from the rural areas of the central region. The highest single cause of hospital admissions is environmentally related diseases. They are the diseases which relate particularly to a lack of water.

Mr Perron: Is that the government's fault?

Mr EDE: One of the main diseases is gastroenteritis. As you know, Mr Speaker, we are once again going through a perennial stage where the hospital is crowded with babies and young kids from outlying areas who are suffering from gastroenteritis.



Mr Perron: Is that the government's fault? Come on, answer the question.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will take that on board, because it is very directly the government's fault. There is a direct correlation between a lack of good quality, adequate water supplies, and gastroenteritis. It is a direct connection - where there is one, there is the other.

Mr Perron: Where did the water come from several thousand years ago?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the question asked by the member for Fannie Bay once again shows his ignorance. I find very difficult to answer adequately in a mere 10 minutes. Let it be said, however, that people during that period lived a hunter-gatherer existence in which they moved from place to place. They did not remain long enough in one place to build up a germ bank which is what causes these diseases nowadays. When a population changes from a hunter-gatherer existence and settles on the land, when it starts to use blankets and clothing, the accumulation of germs and the spread of disease begins. That can only be counteracted by adequate supplies of good quality water. I have raised this time and time again and I thought that it would be getting through by now. Obviously, it has not yet got through to the member for Fannie Bay.

Mr Perron: They are still moving ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will be heard in silence. The member for Fannie Bay will cease his constant interjections.

Mr Perron: Was that constant?

Mr SPEAKER: For the information of the honourable member, 2 is often and 3 is constant.

Mr EDE: I have told honourable members before that research has clearly demonstrated that water consumption for each person in a static community needs to be more than 20 L per day before the conditions for basic good health exist. The government is spending millions of dollars on bandaid medicine in hospitals. If it can be convinced by a financial argument, it should recognise that the costs of running the Alice Springs Hospital would be considerably reduced by investing a couple of years' work and some money to establish decent water supplies out bush.

Our research has shown that, in many of those outstations which have inadequate supplies of good quality water, water consumption is in the vicinity of 4 L to 5 L per person per day. That occurs in places without equipped bores. That amount of water is only just sufficient for survival. It leaves no excess for the washing of clothes, people, blankets and so on. In many of those communities, because of the lack of ground water, people utilise soakages. Mr Speaker, you know that the traditional use of a soak was quite safe when people were moving around. However, when people are established at a soakage for a long period of time, there is a build-up of germs and the water becomes bacteriologically unsafe.

In my electorate, these factors contribute heavily to the extremely high rates of sickness and hospitalisation. I plead with the government to have another look at this and to at least make some statement to this Assembly about it because I am talking about citizens of the Northern Territory. I beg the government to tell the Assembly how it will ensure that, by the end of the International Decade of Water, people will have the absolute basic minimum of

at least 20 L per person per day, delivered in a form which is adequate, and available within 20 ft of where the people are. Let us hear how this government will achieve this itself, without passing the buck.

In the time that is available to me, I wish to allude briefly to one other matter. It relates to a government gazette which, unfortunately, I had not seen before today. It sets out the names of communities which, while not constituted under the community government section of the Local Government Act, have been given approval to receive funds from the Grants Commission. There are 3 communities in my area which are blatant omissions from that gazette. I refer to Nyirripi, Napperby and Mount Allan. In view of the standards which appear to have been applied to other communities around the Northern Territory, they should have been on that list. I believe this was the subject of a debate this morning, and it is probably quite inappropriate of me to raise it at this stage. However, having put it on record, I hope that the minister will take up my concerns in relation to those 3 communities and at least advise me how they are less worthy than other communities which he has placed on the list. Possibly he has overlooked them and will do something to rectify the matter.

Mr STEELE (Elsey): Mr Speaker, there is no doubt about the veracity of what the member for Stuart had to say about the seriousness of water development in the Northern Territory. I support him totally in his concern about the inadequate supplies of water in communities and, generally speaking, the development of water exploration throughout the Northern Territory. Obviously, there are good reasons why water development is not taking place at a greater rate and I suggest that the member should look very closely at the actions of the federal government in respect of its support for water investigations and development, particularly in the Northern Territory. Its actions in past budgets have reduced water development drastically. I think it is a very shortsighted policy but it fits quite comfortably with its attitude towards expenditure in the Northern Territory.

I have risen tonight to talk about matters in my electorate, in particular the effect of Katherine's growth on traffic management in the town. Several intersections need to be examined and a proper traffic study developed. Consideration should be given to: access in and out of Katherine Terrace, particularly at the Giles Street and Victoria Highway intersection; the impact of having 200 parking spaces at the Woolworths development site that enters into Katherine Terrace; the effect and method of angle parking in Katherine Terrace; the delay in funding the Stuart Highway duplication between Katherine Terrace and the industrial area; the delay in funding Victoria Highway development; and the impact of heavy road transports traversing the Katherine Terrace area.

Because of these matters, I am very concerned about the safety of residents in Katherine. For quite some time, I have been watching the increase in traffic in the main street. The Northern Territory has the major responsibility for the Stuart Highway, the Victoria Highway and Giles Street, which is the main arterial road leading out to the Katherine Gorge.

The Northern Territory government has been examining these problems. I recently received a letter from the government outlining discussions and studies presently under way. They are joint studies involving the Katherine Town Council and the Lands Department in liaison with the Department of Transport and Works, and they cover parking, traffic management and the operation of the central business area. The Katherine strategy plan is being produced under the auspices of the joint planning group with ongoing liaison

with the Katherine Town Council. Mr Speaker, continuous examination of these problems takes place wherever there is growth in the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, in your experience as a member from the Alice Springs area, the studies did not keep up with the growth of the town. As you know, Sir, Alice Springs needs further attention as far as traffic studies are concerned. Katherine, with a population approaching 6000, will soon experience a desperate need for direction in respect of traffic management.

It is all very well to have these studies in place, but we are reaching a time when action needs to be taken. Funding needs to be allocated for the duplication of the main Stuart Highway south of Katherine. If this does not take place in the next year or 2, I can see very serious congestion problems emerging. At present, the access into the sporting grounds is from the Stuart Highway. I believe that there should be provision for rear access to the sporting area of Katherine. Access from the main highway is inappropriate, and the same applies to any other proposed development that might take place in that area. It is important that these matters be kept under review by government so that speeding-up of the process of examination can occur. Too often, these studies and plans lag behind events, and I believe the process needs to be speeded up in ensuing budgets.

Mr Speaker, I want to give a quick congratulation to Mataranka. I understand that one of the Territory Tidy Towns awards, that for Best Business Project, went to the business known as The Stockyard, in Mataranka. It is a very important part of the tourist infrastructure in that town, and congratulations are in order.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I would like to reflect on a number of adjournment debates throughout this sittings. Firstly, I would like to refer to what can only be called the wimpish hypocrisy of the member for Arafura last Wednesday evening, and I am sure that honourable members ...

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Wagaman will withdraw those remarks. They are unparliamentary.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw.

The attitude of the member for Arafura could only be referred to as wimpish hypocrisy, and I shall explain myself. I took great exception to the schoolmarm lecture he gave us last Wednesday evening. I suppose that many members, like myself, have been to other parliaments in Australia where, generally, behaviour is quite outlandish. Taking a balanced view, behaviour in this Assembly is quite civilised. Members are pulled up by you, Mr Speaker, when they make comments which are considered to be unparliamentary and even the use of minor epithets draws your wrath, and quite rightly so.

I deliberately used the word 'hypocrisy' because the member for Arafura lectured government members about their behaviour. He referred to members conducting running dialogues across the floor and he reflected on members who, as he said, were walking around and chewing gum and lying back in their chairs. Such behaviour is probably a little bit out of order, but when the continual provocative interjections from members of the opposition are considered, it is no wonder that members of the government react.

We have heard again tonight some classic examples of abuse of the intellect of members of the government. We are aware that the member for Arafura has cause for concern, living as he does in an intellectual vacuum on the opposition benches. Opposition members have good cause to be sensitive

about the constructive contributions to debate by members of the government. This morning, we had to listen to an MPI speech which was read by an opposition member. I would have thought that, since an MPI is a matter of extreme public importance, any member would be sufficiently moved to stand on his feet and speak from the gut ...

Mr D.W. Collins: From the heart.

Mr FINCH: Or from the heart, as the member for Sadadeen says.

Words such as 'clowns' and 'drongoes', which opposition members include in their interjections from time to time, are deliberately used to incite a riot. Today's behaviour by members of the government indicates that we are resisting, with great effort and decorum, these attempts to draw us into the gutter.

After my first year in this place, I spoke about the need for constructive input from members of the government backbench because it was quite obvious that members of the opposition were either unable or unprepared to contribute to debate in this Assembly on behalf of the electorates they represent. I said in the same speech that I was quite happy to mix it with the best of them, and I am still quite prepared to do so, but I would like to think that we can still maintain a reasonable level of decorum compared to other places.

One of the things about the member for Arafura's comments last week which really got up my nose was the way he took advantage of a group of school kids who were here. It was not the first time he has done that. He misused some unfortunate comments by those children concerning what they thought was boring or untoward in the behaviour of members of the Assembly. I think that it would have behoved him to inform those children about how behaviour here compares with that in other parliaments around the country, and to put their concerns into perspective.

On reading the newspaper report, one did not need to have much imagination to work out who was the member seen picking his nose. Nor did we have to think very much about the members seen to be wandering around the Chamber. Members of the opposition have a great deal of difficulty in sitting down while a debate is in progress. Time after time, day after day, the benches opposite are almost vacant. As is often the case, we presently have only 1 member of the opposition in the Chamber. It is a token gesture, as I often say.

Mr Ede: I am not a token gesture.

Mr FINCH: It is pleasing to see that the member for Stuart is here on his own with some sort of consistency and I shall do my best to see that he is acknowledged for that.

It is really the pits to attempt to bring this Assembly into disrepute by taking cheap political advantage of a visit by some schoolchildren and the unfortunate comments that they made. Not only did the member for Arafura fail to clarify for those students - and for the public when he made his comments later - that the behaviour in this Assembly is extremely civilised in comparison with that in other parliaments, he tried to make political play out of it.

The intellect of members of the opposition has been reflected in debates relating to the university. We have heard the minister inform us so many

times why it is so necessary for us to provide a facility for some 100 or 200 Territory students. No amount of money should be spent on trying to educate members opposite because it would be a total waste. Action was taken by the Territory government, after extensive frustration at the hands of CTEC, to provide an interim facility at a realistic cost. I emphasise that it is an interim facility. Obviously, members opposite still have difficulty in understanding why we are using the college system via the University of Queensland as a sensible developmental step towards full autonomy. Nonetheless, if they reflect on it over Christmas, we might have some more constructive input from them next year.

The member for Stuart spoke about water and I certainly endorse the comment that water plays an incredibly important part in civilisation and health. In fact, it is the vital resource for development of any kind. On that basis, it is extremely distressing that the federal government has seen fit to retreat from its acceptance of the Water 2000 report which was tabled last year. The importance of water assessment and developmental programs was laid down very clearly in the report. The federal government not only has failed to accelerate that monitoring and assessment program but, this year, has given zero funding to the water assessment program in the Northern Territory. We all know that water is extremely important in the Northern Territory, not only for the health of communities but also in terms of development. Agricultural, horticultural, mining and, in fact, all types of development require water.

I put it to the member for Stuart that he ought to talk to his buddies in Canberra, such as Senator Evans and Senator Walsh, and convince them that Australia was settled at the wrong end to start with. It was settled where there were inadequate water supplies, limited capacity for development and limited natural resources instead of in the area that holds the key to Australia's future economic existence. He should try to convince them that directing appropriate funds towards the Top End's development would be more in order.

I would like to finish by commenting on another matter raised in the adjournment: the question of misleading the Assembly in relation to Kakadu. I find it absolutely astounding that what is alleged to be a scientific project relating to the monitoring of buffalo extends over an incredibly large area - that is what is claimed although I have not had it verified - where buffalo are allowed to roam at will to destroy what is supposed to be country fit for inclusion on the World Heritage List. I find it outrageous that members of the opposition can not only acknowledge that but in fact raise ...

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Under standing order 59, the member is clearly not alluding to the subject that was raised during the adjournment debate, but is alluding to the subject of the debate last Tuesday morning on the rights and wrongs of Kakadu stage 2 being on the World Heritage List.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, in speaking to the point of order, I point out that the matters to which I was referring do not relate to an earlier debate but relate specifically to the question of the location of the CSIRO area in Kapalga and whether it has been filmed as part of the Territory's submission.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, it is outrageous to suggest that an area that has some 2000 buffalo roaming free is worthy of inclusion on the World Heritage

List. The suggestion that the minister misled the Assembly is not only irrelevant but, in itself, an absolute nonsense.

As I mentioned earlier, the standard of debate from the opposition benches warrants significant uplifting. I would seek the cooperation of the sole token representative of the opposition, the member for Stuart, in improving matters.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I would like to address the water problem at Anningie for a few short moments. The reason I have been unable to supply a definitive and categorical answer to the member for Stuart's question is that my department and the Water Resources Division have been making considerable endeavours for months, even years, to attempt to confirm a reliable and suitable water supply for that community.

We have spent many thousands of dollars trying to locate water in that particular area. For honourable members who are not aware of the situation, Anningie is a pastoral property with an Aboriginal community of some 40 to 80 people currently seeking to have a pastoral excision registered. Both the homestead and the Aboriginal community survive on a substandard water supply. Approximately 10 houses are located on the edge of the creek and derive their water from 2 sand spears in the creek. The washing and cleaning, which takes place near the sand spears, is recycled in the water supply. Groundwater potential in the area is very poor and drilling to date has revealed only extremely saline water which is inadequate in quality and quantity to support a community of greater than approximately 70 people.

Many options for obtaining a reliable water source have been explored, including the construction of a Mexican dam, which the member opposite insists is the answer. By the way, he has never given any of his qualifications which might tell us why we should believe him when he says the Mexican dam is the be-all and end-all.

Mr Ede: It is obvious. I am just smarter than you.

Mr DALE: Yes, that is right. You are.

The Mexican dam option has already been explored by experts and, if the honourable member wishes to challenge the expertise of these particular people, he might like to do so publicly outside this Assembly. Certainly, I would take their advice before I would take his, and I will explain why in a moment.

Due to the significant irregularity of the clay surface beneath the sand, a good seal to trap the water cannot be guaranteed. That is why the Mexican dam system will not suffice in that particular location. After many tests and analyses of options, those which remain are: first, to cart by water tank from the nearest supply at a cost of \$115 500 per year, plus \$80 000 for storage and reticulation; secondly, to pump from Black Hills, 25 km away, which would require the establishment of a bore with more than 2 litres per second capacity, at a cost of some \$0.925m; thirdly, to pump from Ti Tree, which is 45 km away, at a cost of \$1.465m; or fourthly, for the community to relocate to a site which would allow for an increased water supply and suitable living standards.

The member for Stuart has engaged in his usual practice of writing letters a few weeks prior to sittings of the Assembly. They are full of emotive expressions such as 'people are going blind and children are dying but the

problem remains'. I suggest that this illustrates once again what I have said many times during these sittings. The only thing that members of this opposition want to do as far as Aboriginal affairs are concerned is to patronise the Aboriginal people.

The honourable member should not try to convince those people of his expertise in the field of Mexican dams or holy water from the skies which simply do not exist out in that area. He puts his arms around their shoulders and tells them what a great bloke he is and how he will go up to Darwin in a couple of weeks and really bash that government around. He tells them he will work miracles by supplying water where there is none. That is the fact of the matter. This member patronises those people. He sits by and watches the blindness, watches children die, and does nothing but patronise them.

Mr Ede: I have been screaming about it for 7 years. What have you been doing for the last 7 years? You have been sitting on your tail.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Stuart was protected from interjections by the Chair a few minutes ago. I will now offer the same protection to the minister. He will be heard in silence.

Mr DALE: I thank you for that protection, Mr Speaker.

This member sits back and watches his constituents go through the agonising experience of having no water or insufficient water of any reasonable quality. He watches the hepatitis raging through the community. He watches the gastroenteritis sufferers. He watches the blindness and all of the other problems. He wants to use his words to bend our hearts. He has to bend his back; he has to change his attitude towards Aboriginal people. They have got to be given self-motivation. You have heard me say it before, and you are going to hear me say it again, Mr Speaker. He has a role to play. He has a duty in the efficient management of Aboriginal affairs in this Northern Territory and, in particular, in his constituency. He has to go there and talk to these people about the practicalities. He is not doing that and he is therefore not doing his job.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, there has been a lot of talk about water this afternoon. I would like to address honourable members on the state of the economy and taxation, and what is happening to this country right at the moment.

In this country, we are in deep trouble. You do not have to be an economist or a banker to realise that this once-wealthy nation of ours is now on the bones of its backside. A French king's adviser once defined taxation as the art of plucking the goose so as to obtain the maximum amount of feathers with the minimum amount of hissing. In the hands of this federal Labor government, taxation is not so much an art form as a form of assault. The geese are not hissing, they are honking, and they are honking very loudly. The government has become expert at feather-plucking since it came to power. It has introduced more new taxes than any other government in the country's history.

Let me just run through a few of these dreadful taxes: the pensioner assets tax; tax on superannuation lump sum payments; capital gains tax; abolition of the negative gearing on investments in flat and home unit construction; and, of course, the fringe benefits tax. I do not need to enlighten members about the inequalities of the fringe benefits tax. What I would like to know is why we suddenly need all these extra taxes. Is it

because the government perceives that there is a huge group of fat cats out there with vast amounts of money which should be ripped off them because they have been making themselves fat and rich over all these years? Of course not! That is absolute nonsense. The real reason is that the social programs of this particular government have put it so far in the red that it is desperate to put its hands on any funds that it can possibly get hold of. That is the real reason.

What the government overlooks is that the majority of people in this country belong to middle Australia: the middle income earners. I would accept that we have a group of people at the top of the range. Maybe this group would constitute 10% of the population. I do not know. We also have a small group at the bottom, maybe 10%, who are poor people. But, in between we have middle Australia, the average Joe Bloggs out there in the street, the tradesmen, labourers, shop assistants, public servants, clerical workers, and so on. I would consider these people to be middle Australia because most of them have motor cars and most of them - certainly those in the Northern Territory - have the opportunity to live in reasonable accommodation and they can enjoy themselves by going to the beach or to the casino occasionally or perhaps out to dinner. Certainly, they enjoy sport. Yet these are the people who are being got at by the Hawke Labor Government.

There have been numerous increases and charges. For example, a pharmacy prescription which until very recently cost \$4 now costs \$11. That one was slipped in quietly on us. Rumour has it that Mr Keating's \$3500m budgeted deficit for this financial year is looking very shaky now. In fact, if what happened to Medicare in last year's federal budget is any indication, this government is in deep trouble with its current budget. Last year Medicare blew out by about 8% which represents \$94m. That is an awful lot of money.

The federal government certainly has a major problem on its hands. I am referring to ALP policies. I believe that the fools are still out there fighting the class war. They see themselves as robbing the rich to fund the poor. I ask you, Mr Speaker, was Robin Hood a socialist? I think not. Robin Hood was a person who redirected funds from the rich. The wealthy classes were very rich in those days, and they certainly did manipulate and abuse the poor, and Robin Hood was quite justified in the actions that he took. That is certainly not the case in this country today.

Take for example, the conflict between the Minister for Social Security, Brian Howe, and our good friend Senator Walsh. I am told that the Minister for Social Security describes himself as the minister for society's safety net. Senator Walsh on the other hand is the architect of the government's fiscal policy and, much to our regret, he is indeed a hard-headed money manager. The Labor Party is therefore caught up in an internal debate, one which, I believe, will eventually tear it apart and certainly push it from government. The polls are showing that right now. Members of the federal government are caught in a catch 22 situation. They are caught between their social conscience and the need to contain the federal budget blowout. During the past 3 years, we have seen a redirection of this country's resources from productive job-creating areas into social welfare. I recently quoted in this Assembly, examples of funding to non-productive socially-orientated groups which consume an enormous amount of money and produce almost no income at all.

The other day I quoted extracts from a report circulated by the Australia Council which launders federal money into some of these groups. In my opinion, many of them are undeserving of it. On that occasion, I mentioned funding to peace groups in particular. I have just received the latest



edition of the Australia Council magazine, Artforce No 55 of 1986. My fears are confirmed. The Australia Council is a means of funding such groups and sponsoring the activities of unions. Let me quote from Artforce:

Under its governing act, the council is required to provide every Australian with access to the arts and an opportunity to participate in a creative activity. By cooperating with the trade union movement through the Art and Working Life program, we have an opportunity to gain access to 3 million trade unionists. That is half the working population. When you take into account their families, this program is arguably reaching half the entire population.

Mr Ede: It sounds fair enough.

Mr SETTER: I am sure it would to you, but it certainly doesn't to me. The quote continues:

During the past 4 years of its existence, the Art and Working Life program has provided employment for 500 professional artists. The existence of the program has also encouraged unions to employ more artists with their own funds to make banners, take photographs and design posters.

What a productive exercise that is. But, of course, it keeps 500 professional artists in a job. Projects funded under the program include plays, song writing, murals and union banner making. I know the Miscellaneous Workers Union here recently received \$4000 to paint a mural. One imagines it is in its office somewhere.

In the 1985-86 year the Australia Council budget for union arts funding was \$39m and in fact, over the last 4 years, it has spent \$155.5m. Artforce says, under the heading of 'Supporting a Tradition' that:

Through the Art and Working Life program, the arts are gaining a permanent place on the trade union agenda. The thrust of the program has been to fund artists to become more directly involved with workers and to interpret the experiences of the Australian work force in art, whether it be photography, writing, theatre, music or painting. Working class culture has made a significant and unique contribution to cultural development in Australia, according to Deborah Mills, the Australian Arts Council Officer coordinating the program. There is no other western country where the broad cultural traditions have been as influenced by working class culture.

Great stuff, and it is all costing us good taxpayers' money when we are on the bones of our backside and, as I said a moment ago, on the brink of recession. How can this government justify spending that sort of money? It is only the tip of the iceberg too. I could go on for hours talking about the same sort of thing. How can the government justify spending that sort of money on programs like this when we have people out there who are unemployed? Productive projects like the construction of a new airport terminal in Darwin have been cut so that funds can be redirected into crazy programs like this. It is absolute nonsense and I am totally disgusted with it.

What we really need in this country is a whole change in the taxation system. This scheme we presently have, under which the harder you work and the more you earn, the higher your percentage of taxation, is outdated and outmoded. It is one of the causes of the problems we have in this country

today, and it is the reason why the use of fringe benefits has built up over the years. Workers have gone to their employers and asked, not for increased salaries, but recompense by some other means. I have been an employer. People have said the same thing to me. That is why the fringe benefits industry has built up over the last 20 years in this country. The majority of Australians are hard-working people who want to get off their butts and make something of their lives, work hard and earn money, but they are being taxed out of existence. That is why fringe benefits have developed in Australia, and Keating and Hawke are now out to attack them.

However, they do not realise that it would be more appropriate to implement something along the lines of a flat tax system whereby everybody paid the same percentage of tax. Of course, that would not mean that everyone paid the same amount in dollars. There are experts in this country who could work out the appropriate level. It might be 30% or some similar figure. Everyone would pay that percentage of earnings, whether working as a garbage collector or Prime Minister. All people on the PAYE taxation system would pay the same rate.

Further, a flat taxation system on all goods and services should be imposed. It could be levied at the rate of 10%, to pluck a figure out of the air, or 15%. Both these rates apply in other countries. Whenever a person purchased goods or received a service, he would pay the tax. It is the 'user-pays' principle, Mr Speaker. That is the way we have to move in Australia.

I can see my time is running out, but let me close with this quotation. It comes from Austin O'Malley: 'In levying taxes, in shearing sheep, it is well to stop when you get down to the skin'.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I move that the member for Barkly be granted leave of absence for the remainder of this week because of family problems.

Leave granted.

#### TABLED PAPER

##### Report on Menzies School of Health Research

Mr MANZIE (Education)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I table the Report on the Menzies School of Health Research.

Mr Speaker, this report relates to the first 2 years of operation of the Menzies School of Health Research. Honourable members will note that the report contains financial reports of the school's operation over the past 2 financial years. The auditing and accounting work for the 1984-85 financial year was carried out by finance officers and auditors of the Northern Territory government. This arrangement was followed because, at that stage, the school was administered by the Northern Territory Department of Education and all funds paid into the Menzies School of Health Research Trust Fund were administered under Territory government regulations and subject to normal government auditing procedures. However, in 1985, the school became an independent body and subsequently established its own banking and financial procedures. As a result of this move, the school's accounts for the 1985-86 financial year were audited by the Northern Territory Auditor-General. This process will continue and reports will be tabled annually in the Assembly.

I would like to take a few moments to discuss the work that this report covers. I know that annual reports are often dry and unexciting but, in this case, I would urge honourable members to spend some time examining the document. If members take the time to read what is being achieved by the school, I think they cannot fail to be impressed.

Since the school was established, more than 40 researchers have undertaken work there in a wide range of areas including public health, epidemiology, occupational health, clinical research, nutrition, microbiology, molecular genetics and immunology. The school has already completed some substantial pieces of research on heart disease and diabetes in Darwin and Aboriginal communities. The school is also working with the Department of Health to evaluate and improve public health programs for the prevention of trachoma, otitis media, hepatitis B, AIDS and alcohol and drug-related problems. At present, scientists are working to develop a vaccine that could prevent trachoma and, possibly, otitis media, as well as other conditions responsible for a great deal of ill-health, particularly in Aboriginal communities.

There are plans for new facilities which will include a special laboratory so that work on AIDS, hepatitis B and other hazardous viruses can be carried out without danger to staff. Mr Speaker, this may sound unexciting, but it is important to recognise that the Menzies School of Health Research is carrying out work which is attracting national and international attention. An indication of this is that the school has been successful in obtaining research grants and donations in open competition with the best research institutes around Australia and overseas. The school has become a focus for research into Aboriginal health problems and has organised a national workshop

on research priorities to improve Aboriginal health. This workshop will be funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council and will be held later this month in Alice Springs.

It is a considerable feat by the governing board, and the director of the school, that so much has been achieved in comparatively little time. I would urge honourable members not to file this report in a neglected cupboard somewhere in the back of their offices. Instead, I suggest that they take the time to read it and gain an appreciation of the valuable work which is being undertaken at the school. I suggest that, if members are interested in learning more about what is occurring at the Menzies School of Health Research, they make contact with the director, Professor Matthews, and arrange to visit the school. I believe the Leader of the Opposition has inspected the school and I think that he is as impressed as I am by the application and effort that is occurring there.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, it gives me pleasure to respond to the minister's statement even though we had no notice of it. I understand other significant people in the Assembly have had no notice either. Clearly, the Menzies School of Health Research is one of the success stories of the Northern Territory. I had the opportunity recently to meet its board, together with the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health. I must say that I came away quite impressed with its activities. What impressed me particularly was that it is more interested in practical research than theoretical research. Even though the school has only been established for a couple of years, it already has some significant results on the board. That is very encouraging indeed.

The other encouraging thing is that the school quite accurately picked out the major areas of need for medical research in the Northern Territory, and is concentrating its efforts in those areas. I am sure that, in the next few years, the Menzies School of Health Research will be a very significant force for improving the health of people in the Territory and, in particular, the health of people in Aboriginal communities. All of us who know anything about health in Aboriginal communities realise that there is a real need there.

It should be remembered that there was a bipartisan effort to have the Menzies School of Health Research established. I was quite pleased at the function I attended at which the chairman, Sir William Refshauge, made a particular point of coming up to me and thanking the Labor Party for the role it had played in having the Menzies School of Health research established, and for its continuing support. He made particular reference to the contribution of the member for Arafura. Among the many contributions that the member for Arafura will be remembered for in this Assembly, his role in encouraging the establishment of the Menzies School of Health research will feature prominently. In fact, the Chairman of the Menzies School of Health Research Board went so far as to say that a speech given by the member for Arafura was one of the major impetuses to the formal structure that has been adopted by the school. With that sort of praise, I think the member for Arafura can rest easy and put another feather in his cap in terms of the significant contribution he has made to the political and wider life in the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT  
Electorate Secretaries - Conditions of Employment

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, during the August sittings, the Assembly passed a motion relating to the terms and conditions of employment of electorate secretaries, following the tabling of a review on the matter by the Remuneration Tribunal. Since then, the responsibility for electorate secretaries has been passed from the Department of the Chief Minister to the Department of the Legislative Assembly. I have written to the Public Service Commissioner and I have had discussions with him concerning a further review of the terms and conditions of employment of electorate secretaries. The matter is well in hand and the Public Service Commissioner has undertaken to assist the Clerk and myself whenever necessary in carrying out this review. At present, officers of the Assembly are gathering additional information from other parliaments pertaining to this matter. In undertaking the review, comments of honourable members which were forwarded to the Remuneration Tribunal will be taken into account. Should any member wish to provide me with additional comments, I would be grateful to receive them in writing as soon as possible. It is anticipated that the matter will be resolved before Christmas.

STATEMENT  
Public Accounts Committee

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the Public Accounts Committee was established by sessional order on 17 June 1986. Whilst the committee has not completed work on any of the references forwarded to it, members felt it appropriate to advise the Assembly of activities to date by way of a statement from the chairman.

The Public Accounts Committee's first task was to secure the appointment of a suitable person as secretary to the committee so that groundwork could commence. I am pleased to report that Mr David Rice was appointed and commenced duties on 11 August 1986. Since Mr Rice's appointment, a small computer and secretarial services have been obtained.

All Public Accounts Committees in the states and the Commonwealth were contacted and information gathered on their modus operandi, along with copies of recent reports. The committee has adopted a set of operating procedures and released a document entitled 'Notes for Witnesses' outlining these procedures for the information of government departments, authorities and anyone else having an interest in the workings of the Public Accounts Committee.

The method of operation decided upon is based upon traditional Westminster procedures, and parallels that applied in the rest of Australia. Essentially, this allows the committee to meet in camera, with or without witnesses to provide briefings. When the committee is satisfied that it is sufficiently aware of matters pertinent to its inquiries, public sessions will be held. This has been found to be the most efficient approach, and accords with standing orders which preclude the holding of deliberative sessions in public.

The committee has met on 9 occasions to date. Initial meetings dealt with the modus operandi, questions and briefings by core departments. More recently, work has commenced on references received from the Assembly and from the Chief Minister. Committee members found briefings by officers of the Department of the Chief Minister, the Public Service Commissioner and Treasury

most useful in tracking through the various financial control systems within government. The Auditor-General also advised the committee and an ongoing relationship with his office has been established. Other departments which have briefed the committee on their structure and administrative procedures are the Departments of Transport and Works and Community Development.

The committee has received 4 references, including the Aerial Medical Services contract at this current sittings. The others are: the incidence of accelerated end-of-year spending, actual and contingent liabilities of government and the pensioner concession scheme. The reference on the pensioner concession scheme will not be proceeded with, due to subsequent revision of its administration.

The committee is now able to consider any other matters arising from the recently tabled annual report of the Auditor-General for 1985-86. The committee will report to the Assembly at the conclusion of each inquiry and annually in respect of its activities for the year ended 30 June.

#### DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

##### NT Government Failure to Plan Orderly Development of Alice Springs

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the honourable member for MacDonnell:

Dear Mr Speaker,

Pursuant to standing order No 94, I propose for discussion as a definite matter of public importance this morning, the following: the failure of the Northern Territory government to plan adequately for the orderly development of Alice Springs.

Yours sincerely,  
Neil Bell.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the ranges of central Australia are, without a doubt, a joy to both residents and visitors, to you and to me alike and to every member of this Assembly who represents an electorate in central Australia. Without a doubt, they are one of the prime assets of Alice Springs as well as one of its prime aesthetic features. I hear some disagreement from the Minister for Community Development. I would like to point out to him that, before he was a member of this Assembly, the member for Elsey was proposing, in order to relieve the two-dimensionality and dead flatness of Darwin, that a large pile of ruined motor cars be heaped one on top of another in order to provide some gentle relief. I can appreciate that the envy of the member for Wanguri would extend itself to churlishness in respect of my rapt appreciation of the central Australian landscape and the wonderful hills and ranges that make up one of its joys.

Mr Speaker, I do not think there is anything that identifies Alice Springs quite so clearly as Heavitree Gap or, as it is known to the Aranda, Ndaripe. The ranges, of course, owe their undulating quality to the Dreamtime heroes who sat on those ridges, as the Aranda people believe, when those ridges were formed. Mr Speaker, I am quite sure you will appreciate those sorts of associations as a precious aspect of Alice Springs and something that is quite clearly to be protected at all costs.

It is precisely that point that has instituted this current discussion of this matter of public importance. The actions of the Northern Territory government have thrown into doubt the capacity of statutory authorities, in particular the Planning Authority, to plan adequately for the orderly development of Alice Springs and to protect the vistas of those very ranges that are such a precious asset for people who live in the town and for people who visit it.

Today, I will be making various comments, particularly about the proposals put forward by the opposition consistently over several years, and I will contrast those with the attitudes adopted by government members in respect of those and various other planning issues. I will put forward, once again, what I believe to be a sensitive, intelligent and farsighted proposal for the development of a coherent attitude within the Alice Springs Town Plan for building and other development.

Quite obviously, this has become an issue of some considerable interest in recent weeks with the proposal to go ahead with the Lasseter's Casino development. I do not propose to comment on that particular proposal and the means of its approval. My colleague, the member for Stuart, will be dealing with that particular issue at length but it is appropriate that I point out that, quite rightly, that particular development proposal has brought the issue of high-rise development in Alice Springs to public prominence. It has highlighted also the vacillations of the Northern Territory government in that regard.

I will give a very brief history and my colleague will address this question at greater length. The question of height limits in Alice Springs has been the subject of considerable debate over the last 4 or 5 years in the context of various developments. Unfortunately, we have arrived at the situation where the 3-storey height restriction within the Central Business District means, inadvertently, that buildings in excess of 3-storeys are acceptable outside the Central Business District. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you may imagine Alice Springs would look like something like an inverted dish with this 3-storey height limit across the Central Business District and higher buildings outside. We have had the recent approval of Lasseter's Casino and undoubtedly there will be more to follow.

What I am extremely afraid of is the possibility that there will be competition to build the biggest building. If such competition were to develop, I am concerned at what would happen to planning values and what would happen to those vistas of the ranges. That is a crucial area of concern that the opposition has always taken seriously and that the Country Liberal Party government has never taken seriously. There are 3 possibilities. We can have a blanket 3-storey height limit, keeping below tree levels. There has been strong argument in favour of that proposal. That sort of height restriction has been applied to many towns around the world very successfully. However, because of the recent decision for the Lasseter Casino to go ahead, the possibility for such a blanket policy has been thrown out the window.

That is why the opposition has raised this issue as a matter of public importance. It is important to obtain some clear guidelines at this stage. The community demands to know what is acceptable and what is not. It is sick and tired of the sort of ad hoc development that occurs because this government refuses to act. We introduced this discussion in a constructive attempt to fill a vacuum, because the vacuum is certainly there. The blanket 3-storey height limit has been done away with.

The opposition proposed a variable height limit policy. Before I give further details of that policy, I want to speak about the vacillations of government members in this regard. Frontbench government members have vacillated on this issue. I appreciate that the Minister for Lands has an electorate in the northern suburbs of Darwin. He may care to consult with his confrere, the member for Flynn, and find out how many about-turns he has made on this issue. It has been extremely interesting and has demonstrated the relevance of the criticism I am making of the government's actions in this regard.

When the member for Flynn was an alderman on the Alice Springs Town Council, he thought high-rise building was a terrific idea. He believed that market forces should have their way and that allowing people to build high-rise buildings wherever they wished would lead to a vigorous growth in the economy of central Australia. Fortunately, the more rabid ravings of the honourable member for Flynn in that regard did not see the light of day. At one stage, he saw the light because, in the lead-up to the last election, the Northern Territory government instituted a draft planning instrument to restrict building heights in Alice Springs to 3 storeys. That restriction was placed in the Alice Springs Town Plan and, quite inadvertently, has allowed consent to be given to building 4-plus storeys outside the Central Business District.

In the context of the lead-up to the last federal election, the member for Flynn made an overnight turnaround. He made extensive public statements at the time saying that Alice Springs must have a 3-storey height limit. Now we find that, in the hope that the public's memory is very short, High-rise Hanrahan has done another about-turn and is sponsoring high-rise development again. I rather imagine that that is where his heart is.

The point is that the member for Flynn has to take into consideration the aesthetics of central Australia - the circumstances of the landscape - because they are the dollar earners. Time after time the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications gets to his feet in this Assembly saying, 'Growth, growth, growth: that is what is happening'. But nothing will prejudice exactly that growth as effectively as ill-conceived, stumbling town planning.

Let us look at what the opposition is proposing and what is meant by a variable height policy. The opposition is proposing a landscape value study that will take into consideration issues like sight lines and appropriate plot ratios. Heavitree Gap affords a good example of a sight line that should never be interrupted. I presume even the denizens of the Top End have climbed to the top of Anzac Hill and seen that lovely vista of Alice Springs, right round from the Sadadeen Hills, along the range, down to Heavitree Gap and back along to Mount Gillen. I do not think there can be a more spectacular townscape than that anywhere in the country. Particular aspects of that vista should never be interrupted. That is a sight line, from the top of Anzac Hill down to Heavitree Gap. Obviously, there will be other sight lines worthy of preservation ...

Mr Perron: That is another CBD policy plan.

Mr BELL: It is interesting to hear the member for Fannie Bay interjecting. I sincerely hope he will contribute sensibly to this debate.

I have given an example of 1 sight line. Obviously, a landscape value study, such as the opposition is proposing, would look at other sight lines.



Proposals could be developed where particular building heights could be acceptable in different places so that those sight lines were protected. It may turn out, for example ...

Mr Dondas: But that is what is happening now.

Mr BELL: The member for Fannie Bay keeps interjecting. That is not what happens now. If he had listened to what I said at the start of my contribution to this debate, he would have heard me say that the town plan that the Northern Territory government has in place at the moment ...

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I think the member is referring to myself. As will be recorded in Hansard, I did not interject.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member will have the opportunity to offer a personal explanation at a later time.

Mr BELL: Can I just urge government members to interject a little more loudly?

Mr Dale: Get on with your first policy statement for the year.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will not incite government members to interject. The member for MacDonnell will be heard in silence.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, the result of such a landscape value study would be appropriate policies for variable heights around Alice Springs. Such a landscape value study may, for example, incline us to move towards a policy where certain areas contained parcels of land where no buildings, whatever their height, could be constructed. Similarly, some sites within the town could lend themselves to the construction of elevated structures in order to facilitate the enjoyment of views towards the ranges without impairing the views to be had from certain public places.

Further, it may be decided to regulate the colour of exterior building materials rather than to prevent construction of buildings that might obstruct a view from particular parts of town. This concept of mitigation in town planning is well exemplified by the so-called 'hills-face' zone in Adelaide that some members may be familiar with. In that zone, there are particular areas where buildings cannot be built at all. The people of that city feel equally strongly about the vistas of their hills and have designated particular zones where building is not permitted.

Interestingly, and this is why I refer to the concept of mitigation, there are zones which can be built in but where there are very careful prescriptions about the sorts of materials that can be used so that sight lines from particular parts of the town to the hills, against which those buildings are viewed, will not be disturbed. The buildings blend with the hills. One does not have to be particularly imaginative to see that, with the sort of building material available to us in central Australia - our wonderful central Australian sandstone - that sort of concept may be well worthy of consideration.

A further element of the opposition's policy in this regard is that height limits be specified, not necessarily in storeys, but in metres also. Perhaps the Minister for Lands will refer to the proposed building height policy that his department issued without much effect in 1982. A concept of a building

height policy with stepped heights was indicated in that particular policy which was issued for public comment. We had the sort of direction that we are looking for. The problem with that particular policy was that it referred only to the Central Business District. What the opposition is proposing, I hope constructively, is a holistic, variable-heights policy for central Australia.

In closing, I want to point out that the deliberations of this Assembly and of the Alice Springs Town Council are crucial in this regard. The question that must be asked is: will the legacy of self-government be a framework for economic growth in Alice Springs in balance with the community's genuine desire to preserve certain planning values or will the legacy of self-government be an unattractive melange of quasi, big-city architecture that nobody likes and which drives away ...

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

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Technology and Communications): Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell claims to represent central Australia. If that is evidence of his representation of central Australia, I can only say to him that it is absolutely shameful. I do not mind him denigrating me and suggesting that I am High-rise Hanrahan, but I would like to point out to him that the very use of the word 'high-rise' is an absolute misrepresentation. The member for MacDonnell has attempted today to give us his grand plan, his 3-tiered policy statement. He got to No 1, something about a blanket 3-storey development in the CBD and left it at that.

Mr Speaker I would like to demonstrate to members just how irresponsible the member for MacDonnell has been, that his so-called grand plan is a thing of the past and that his actions have not been in the best interests of the community of Alice Springs. His public statements to date have consisted of 2 press releases which were made after a considerable lapse of time from the events which commenced this issue. I would like to read into Hansard 3 pieces of correspondence. The first is a letter that I wrote on 16 October 1986 to the Chairman of the Planning Authority which I consider to have been a very responsible course of action:

I welcome your action as proposed in the press release under your name dated 15 October 1986 re the 2 projects under consideration in the Mt John tourist precinct. May I formally request the Planning Authority to consider a new zone under the Alice Springs Town Plan specified for the Barrett Drive Mt John Valley tourist precinct. It would appear a logical step to be considered by the authority and for public comment.

The sometimes emotional debates, as recently witnessed over the Lasseter's Casino proposal, only distort the facts relevant to a particular proposal and paint false images of the excellent architectural and aesthetic aspects of many developments. The Mt John Valley area should not be restricted by aspects of the Alice Springs Town Plan that prohibit sensible, economic and aesthetically-pleasing architecture that does not impinge on the surrounding environment.

I believe the Northern Territory Planning Authority to be a responsible body capable of making decisions that are soundly based and are in the best interests of the future development of Alice Springs. I urge you to consider the creation of a new zone for this

area and would be happy to present my views to the authority at a convenient time.

Ray Hanrahan,  
Member for Flynn.

Mr Speaker, I wrote a letter to Her Worship the Mayor, dated the same day:

I attach, for your information, recent correspondence to the Chairman, Northern Territory Planning Authority. I believe that it is time that effort was made to introduce some reasoned arguments as to the future development of the Mt John Valley Barrett Drive tourist precinct. Recent emotional outbursts have not been in the public interest, especially when they are made without any knowledge of the proposed developments.

Developments such as the Sheraton Hotel are perfectly acceptable to me and, I presume, to the general public who would be ignorant of the fact that the height of the Sheraton Hotel is greater than the planned development of Lasseter's Casino. It is time for all the facts to be considered and public comment sought and I trust you would support my move to have all the facts presented to the public. I would appreciate an early meeting to discuss the feasibility of the introduction of a height restriction to the Mt John Valley precinct.

Yours,  
Ray Hanrahan,  
Member for Flynn.

Mr Speaker, I have received a reply from Her Worship the Mayor:

My Dear Minister,

Thank you for your recent letter relating to future development in the Mt John Valley. The Town Planning and Development Committee considered the contents of your letter at its meeting held on 10 November 1986 and members of the committee have expressed an eagerness to meet with you at an early date to discuss some of the matters which you have raised. The council will shortly be considering a recommendation from the Town Planning and Development Committee that the council's policy on building heights in the town generally should be reviewed.

Before that review is carried out, it seems to me that it would be advisable for the members to have the benefit of your views in relation to tourist developments in the future. May I suggest that if you find it convenient to meet the committee ...

Mr Speaker, it is a responsible course of action to place all the facts before the relevant people who should make this decision. Subsequently, the Town Planning Authority in Alice Springs made a decision relating to the Lasseter's Casino proposal. I might point out to honourable members who is on that Planning Authority. The chairman is Barry Willing, the deputy chairman is Grant Tambling and the members are Peter Barr, a Darwin solicitor, and 4 Alice Springs aldermen.

The government has said consistently that, where possible, it would involve the Alice Springs Town Council in the decision-making process. There

is a clear majority of Alice Springs aldermen on that Planning Authority and they represent the community of Alice Springs. They were elected to do so, and they have made a decision. The member for MacDonnell told us this morning that the community is crying out for representation, that it is crying out to be heard. The people have been heard and they have been represented by their elected aldermen and Her Worship the Mayor of Alice Springs. I indicated quite clearly in my correspondence to the Planning Authority and in my correspondence to Her Worship the Mayor, that the height policy applicable to the Mt John Valley tourist precinct was of prime concern to myself and the government. I am as aware as members opposite that buildings which are too high will impact on the vista of the foothills. That is why I wrote my letter.

However, the Town Planning Authority, whose majority represents the people of the town, has made a decision. It is a decision which I happen to support. The authority stated clearly in a press release to the people of Alice Springs that it had called for the development of a policy which would allow for considerable public input. The government feels that the major input into that policy must come from the Alice Springs Town Council, which comprises those elected to represent the people of the town. May I advise members opposite, if they are not aware of it, of a recent decision by the Alice Springs Town Council's committee on planning and development. It has voted in favour of a total review of the council's policy on planned development and building heights in the Alice Springs area. That is a very sensible move indeed. It recognises some very important factors. It recognises that Alice Springs is changing. Its development is being impeded by what I consider to be outdated policies.

For the benefit of members, the current height restriction policy in the Alice Springs Town Plan applies to buildings in the CBD in excess of 7 m or in excess of 2 storeys. I happen to think that the height limit should be 3 storeys for an area along the Todd Street Mall. The reasons for that are obvious. The mall is undergoing a major redevelopment which is one of the reasons why the Alice Springs Town Council is reviewing its policy. It would not be a good idea to have buildings in excess of 3 stories along the Todd Street Mall, but there are very good reasons for allowing buildings higher than 2 storeys or 7 m in certain areas of the CBD. The member for MacDonnell spoke about plot ratio, which is the amount of space that a building occupies. We already have some glaring examples of the type of buildings that result from such a restrictive height policy. They are facing Todd Street now. One of the reasons why the CBD is so large is that it has been taken up by buildings that cover larger areas of land than they really require.

It is absolutely essential that the public of Alice Springs be involved in the total review of the Alice Springs Town Council's planning and development policy because there are some factors which will have a great deal of bearing on the development of the CBD in the future. One of these is the possible development of Undoolya. No one denies that Undoolya will develop at some stage.

Traffic flows and the present size of the CBD indicate that it is not big enough to handle the growth that is expected in the next 5 years. It will be necessary to do 1 of 2 things. First, another CBD could be established. To me, that would be absolutely ludicrous because it would split the commercial district. Secondly, the planning and development policy could be reviewed, particularly in terms of height restrictions. The terms 'multi-storey' and 'high-rise' have been bandied about by the member for MacDonnell as dirty words. That is a gross misrepresentation of the facts. A high-rise building

is not necessarily ugly. All planning aspects are taken into account in designing buildings, and this makes a nonsense of what the member for MacDonnell is suggesting.

I had quite a list of notes here to rebuff the member for MacDonnell, but I am having a little difficulty dealing with his arguments because he had nothing of substance to say, apart from advising this Assembly of the opposition's, or perhaps his own, policy for the future development of Alice Springs. Even that proposal is already being implemented as a matter of course. It was announced by the Deputy Chairman of the Town Planning Authority in a press release and has been dealt with by myself in correspondence.

The point made by the member for MacDonnell that I will pick up is this: if he is so concerned about the proper development of Alice Springs, why hasn't he taken some responsible action instead of issuing 2 press releases which really do nothing but carp at the people who have put before the public, for sensible and logical debate, most of the points at issue?

I did not hear the member for MacDonnell talking about the Alice Springs Town Council or its role in the development of a policy for Alice Springs. I would like to know why. As the government has said time and time again, we would prefer the Alice Springs Town Council to be the decision-making body in the formulation of policy for the town. Why has the member for MacDonnell chosen to ignore absolutely the role of the town council? If he had taken 5 minutes of his time to pick up the phone or write a letter to Her Worship the Mayor or spoken to any of the aldermen on that committee, he would have known that it was reviewing its policy and putting forward a new policy to the Planning Authority. If he had taken 5 minutes of his time to speak to the Deputy Chairman or the Chairman of the Planning Authority, he would have been aware of the action taken by this government, of the action taken by the Department of Lands, of the action taken by myself and of the action taken by the Alice Springs Town Council.

But no, Mr Speaker, he did not do that. He issued 2 press releases which amounted to no more than political grandstanding. It is quite correct to say that the member for MacDonnell is out on his own on this issue. The letters that have been published in the Centralian Advocate from, for example, the GARD people, indicate unequivocally that the views expressed by myself and the Alice Springs Town Council are supported by most of the people. They do not object to 'high-rise' as it is put in inverted commas by the member for MacDonnell. They want to see a sensible planning process.

Mr Speaker, I wrote that letter and issued a subsequent press release for 1 very good reason. It was not to stand in here and have the member for MacDonnell call me High-rise Hanrahan; it was to take what I consider to be a very sensible, logical and correct course of action which was to place the issues before the public of Alice Springs. I can only reiterate that I have done that. The Planning Authority has replied to me. The Mayor of Alice Springs has replied to me and the issue has been discussed at length in the Alice Springs media. That is a good thing because it will lead to the realisation that the Northern Territory government is not irresponsible.

The government wishes to put the issues before the public of Alice Springs. It wants to put the issues as they are today, not as they were 10 years ago. It wants to ensure that the people of Alice Springs realise that they are represented on the Northern Territory Planning Authority, in its decision-making processes on Alice Springs, by a majority composed of Alice

Springs Town Council aldermen. These are the people who make decisions for and on behalf of the community of Alice Springs because they actually represent the community of Alice Springs. That is more than can be said for the member for MacDonnell.

The government's view is that the initiative for any change of policy should come from the Alice Springs Town Council. Its planning and development committee happens to be a committee of the whole council and it is clear, without any shadow of a doubt, that the correct procedures are being followed at the moment. The matters are being debated fully and, at any time, any persons who are interested may take the same course of action as I have. They can write to the Northern Territory Planning Authority and make their views known. They can write to the Mayor of Alice Springs and request an audience with the council's Planning and Development Committee to put their views.

The same applies to members opposite, in particular the members for Stuart and MacDonnell. They should not bring an absolute sham into this Assembly on the pretence of putting forward to the people of Alice Springs and the Northern Territory a sensible and coherent planning policy for the future of Alice Springs and the Mt John Valley precinct. Their course of action is totally irresponsible. I have outlined for them the proper course of action, and I suggest that they follow it forthwith.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications gave us a fine demonstration of his schoolboy debating style. In fact, I believe that, back in 1982, that was his qualification for entry into this Assembly. Unfortunately, like his qualification for entry into this Assembly, his speech today demonstrated the level of real depth in the man.

Mr Hanrahan: My qualification was a considerably larger electoral margin than yours.

Mr EDE: There appears to be growing bipartisan support for planned development in Alice Springs. It is unfortunate that it has taken so long for this to occur in this Assembly. I must congratulate my colleague, the member for MacDonnell, whose perseverance with this issue has dragged government members from Alice Springs, or some of them at least, to accept this particular stand. It was not necessary to convince the people of Alice Springs, the people with a real love for the town who look not for a quick buck but for development to the benefit of themselves and their children. Those people have always wanted planned development.

In this matter, I would like to pay tribute to people like our Mayor, Mrs Leslie Oldfield, who has demonstrated an ability to encapsulate, in a few short words, the deeply held but rarely spoken feeling of that silent majority, those people who desire the planned and orderly development of Alice Springs. It takes people like her, people like the member for MacDonnell and the members of community groups such as GARD, the Group for Appropriate Regional Development, to state the people's views in a way that will make Darwin listen.

Mr Speaker, the minister stated that he wrote to the Town Planning Authority on 16 October 1986 saying he wanted a special zone for Barrett Drive. I would commend him for that but he has made our point in its entirety. Barrett Drive, Mr Speaker, as you well know, is virtually built up already. He is proposing, once again, to shut the gate after the horse has bolted. He has made the same mistake with every development in Alice Springs.

I would like to see how that letter stacks up against his public statements in this regard, and I will refer to the Centralian Advocate of Wednesday 29 October. The newspaper has an excellent headline but, unfortunately, as we go through the paper we find a full-page advertisement that is headed: 'Let Alice Grow'. It was signed by a number of people, including Mr Paul Everingham, the member representing the Northern Territory in the House of Representatives in Canberra. One would expect somebody of that ilk to put his name to an advertisement of this nature, living as he does in Brisbane and tripping around the Northern Territory for ever-decreasing intervals. He has been gone from Alice Springs for a long time and apparently no longer has a great deal of interest in the town. One would expect him, as he has done quite consistently in recent times, to put his name to outrageous statements, and now he is putting it on outrageous advertisements.

Let us have a look at what this advertisement can tell us. At the bottom, it states that the people who put their names to the announcement did so for and on behalf of Lasseter's Casino. We have a minister signing an advertisement for and on behalf of Lasseter's Casino. A minister should not act for and on behalf of any development. He is not an agent for that particular development and he has no right to put his name to it. He did not sign it as Ray Hanrahan MLA for Flynn but as Ray Hanrahan NT government minister. That is absolutely outrageous. A Northern Territory government minister, Mr Ray Hanrahan, has signed an advertisement for and on behalf of Lasseter's Casino. Did he chuck in to pay for this advertisement? That would be very interesting to know. Is he putting his money into this casino?

Mr Hanrahan: No.

Mr EDE: He says that he did not pay for it. Thus, not only did he not pay to get his message across but he has put his name to an advertisement, presumably paid for by Lasseter's Casino, simply to go along with the bunch, to be led by the nose. He did not sign it as the local member but, by association, has led the Northern Territory government into the mire of the debate on Lasseter's Casino height restrictions. That is a gross breach of propriety. It identified the government with a particular position in relation to a matter which was before the Planning Authority.

Mr Speaker, having established the impropriety, what was the substance of this? It is contained in a little note entitled 'A not so tall story': 'It is important to note that the height of the additions to the casino will be lower than the existing Sheraton Hotel'. Let us have a look at that statement. I have a piece of paper which records the heights of various places around the town. It refers to heights above sea level. When you work out the height of those 2 buildings, the Sheraton Hotel and the casino with its proposed additions, by a normal measurement from the ground to the roof rather than from 500 m below the ground or wherever sea level is, it emerges that the height of the proposed extensions to the casino is 16 m, compared with 14.4 m for the Sheraton

Mr Hanrahan: Who made the decision, Brian?

Mr EDE: What a ridiculous question!

Mr Hanrahan: It is 18 m now, but who made the decision?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, what an outrageous question! I will come back to the actual mechanics of the decision about height restrictions if I have time.

I wish to point out that this whole episode can only be construed as an attempt to manipulate the Planning Authority and to manipulate it through pressure and by telling the people of Alice Springs outrageous falsehoods which have been signed by the government minister, Ray Hanrahan, and paid for by the developer. It is absolutely outrageous, Mr Speaker. The minister should apologise for it, not just to this Assembly but to the people of Alice Springs.

Mr Speaker, we know now the honourable minister's method of measuring heights. He takes a sighting from a point thousands of miles away and calculates heights from there whereas the rest of us calculate from the ground up. That is the only means by which what he put his name to here can be construed as correct. Either the minister has used that method or he has made an incorrect statement to the people of Alice Springs. That particular point shows why ministers should not put their names to papers like that and why they should not sign themselves as Northern Territory government ministers. This was something that it had not paid for; the government did not have enough interest in it to pay for it. The minister simply went along with the boys and put his name to a piece of paper with the likes of the federal member for the Northern Territory. We can understand the latter doing it, but I am disgusted that a minister of this Assembly has done it. They have put their names to something which is completely inaccurate and brought themselves and their offices into disrepute.

Mr Speaker, turning back to the question of the decision about the Lasseter's Casino extensions, there are a few points that I would like to make. Initially the heights were not stated in the plan when it was put on public display. The member for MacDonnell went there and found that the only plans there did not mention what the heights would be. The people of Alice Springs were then subjected to a campaign of disinformation in which the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications and the member for the Northern Territory joined and promulgated to the people.

When the facts started to come out, I am informed that there was a last minute rush of submissions from people who had found out the truth and realised that they had been misled by the honourable minister. People rushed to put in submissions at the last minute. The period allowed for lodgment of submissions closed at 4.30 pm on a certain day. The decision was announced that very same day by the acting chairman, who just happened to be a candidate for the Country Liberal Party in the forthcoming Senate ballot.

Mr Leo: How much did you get out of it, Ray?

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for Nhulunbuy has made a most inappropriate accusation across the floor of the Assembly.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for Nhulunbuy will withdraw that remark.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I withdraw the remark unreservedly.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, how could anyone construe that the process of town planning was carried out in a fair and reasonable manner in this regard? There was a campaign of disinformation. Insufficient time was allowed for the submissions to be fully considered, and a decision was made straight after the expiry of the period allowed for comment on the development.



Mr Speaker, I would like to raise a point about the membership of the Planning Authority because the minister made great play about how the aldermen on the Town Planning Authority represent the council. The council has stated consistently that 1 of its major complaints about the town planning process is that aldermen do not represent the council on the authority. They are there as individuals. The council has no ability to discuss issues beforehand. It cannot instruct the aldermen on how to vote. It has no ability to question the aldermen when they come back into a council meeting. It cannot even ask how they voted. It is a most undemocratic process and it is pointless for the minister to state that it is not. He knows that the councils in the Northern Territory have been against that method from the start and they continue to be against it. It is completely undemocratic and we cannot let the minister continue to try to make out that it is a democratic process.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There are far too many interjections. Again, I remind all honourable members that the member for Stuart will be heard in silence.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, we agree that the Planning and Development Committee of the council is taking this matter on, and I commend it for that. At this late stage, it is attempting to develop an overall planning method for Alice Springs. I believe that every member of this Assembly should support it in that work. I call on all members, especially those who live in Alice Springs and those who have any interest in the orderly development of Alice Springs, to join in putting recommendations to the council and the Planning Authority in order to get those people to understand the concepts involved in the development of Alice Springs, the long-term values that we hold for Alice Springs and how we and our children can retain those values. That is my plea to the Assembly today.

Mr DONDAS (Lands): Mr Speaker, in rising to debate this matter of public importance, one really must contain oneself. In his initial travelogue, the member for MacDonnell spent 6 or 7 minutes telling us what a lovely place Alice Springs is for visitors and residents. Another 15 million people in Australia agree with him. However, neither of the opposition speakers spoke to the motion proposed: 'the failure of the Northern Territory government to plan adequately for the orderly development of Alice Springs'.

Mr Ede: You can't even get that right. It is not a motion.

Mr DONDAS: It is a discussion of a matter of public importance.

I have several matters that I would like to cover in the next 15 minutes. Before doing so, I would like to remind members opposite that the Planning Authority includes 4 members of the Alice Springs Town Council. The Planning Authority normally has 7 members but, on that particular day, only 6 members were present. The member for Stuart, of course, fired a shot on the run in relation to the acting chairman. If he had taken the trouble to discuss this with the opposition spokesman on land matters, the member for MacDonnell, he would have been aware why Mr Tambling was the acting chairman on that day. More importantly, Mr Tambling has served on that authority for a number of years and has had previous experience in this Assembly when he was the executive member responsible for those matters. The authority has to conduct its business efficiently. There were a number of agenda items to be heard and, despite the illness of the Chairman of the Planning Authority, it was decided that we did not want to wait another 6 weeks to hold a meeting or to postpone some of the more serious matters.

Taking cheap shots on the run for political gain is not on. The member for Nhulunbuy alleged that there was hanky panky from this side of the Assembly to obtain a decision from the Planning Authority that would suit the Lasseter's Casino development. You can hold up pieces of paper as proof if you like. How many petitions have you signed?

Mr Ede: This is not a petition.

Mr DONDAS: I bet the member for Stuart has signed plenty of petitions in his day. I don't sign petitions, but I bet that he would have signed every petition that came into this Assembly.

The decision was made by the Planning Authority, which includes 4 Alice Springs aldermen.

In the discussion of a matter of public importance held on 23 August 1984, we got a lot more sense out of the opposition. At that time, the opposition gave some constructive criticisms on town planning matters. In the discussion today, all members opposite have done is talk a load of nonsense. They know it and I know it. I am not going to say that we are wasting the time of the Assembly. But if the opposition felt it had an MPI in regard to those matters, why did its members not speak on them instead of talking about irrelevancies? I am here to try to take note of just criticisms. But all I have heard has been a load of educated wank.

Mr B. Collins: Mr Speaker, that really is going beyond the bounds of parliamentary language completely.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The minister will withdraw that remark.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, I withdraw that remark unreservedly.

Mr B. Collins: I am not suggesting that it is not a subject in which he is an expert.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Arafura will not comment on the ruling.

Mr DONDAS: The Central Business District of Alice Springs is not under threat. The vista, the big dish, which the member for MacDonnell described, is not under threat at all. If I may talk about the Lasseter's Casino development for a moment, there was a proposal to develop that facility for the benefit of tourism. In a debate of 23 August 1984, the member for MacDonnell had a great deal to say about Mt John and where we were going with it, and today we are considering further development in that area. It is only a development proposal, and that is what the member for Stuart has missed as well. It is a development application under section 26(1) of the Alice Springs Town Plan. Any building designed to exceed 2 storeys in height must have consent. In his press release, the chairman of the authority said that approval for the project in principle meant fine details had yet to be finalised and that the authority would study the minor details which included the size of the car park and service details. It is only a development application.

More importantly, why have we set Mt John aside? Purely for tourism development and to help Alice Springs in that regard. As I have said before in this Assembly, when the south road is completed, it will have a tremendous impact on the economy of Alice Springs. The fuss members of the opposition

are making over the Lasseter's Casino application is something that I cannot understand.

Mr Speaker, let me discuss the suggestion that the Northern Territory government has failed to plan adequately for the orderly development of Alice Springs. Over the last 4 years, the government has: constructed the Todd River Bridge, providing access to the Ross Farms area and promoting the orderly growth of Alice Springs; approved plans for flood control and new access across the Todd River from the Stuart Highway to Stephens Road; constructed Stephens Road to serve Mt John Valley and the eastern suburbs of Alice Springs; and approved a broad structure plan for Mt John Valley after significant input by the Alice Springs Town Council. This has been reinforced by the Planning Authority requesting a policy statement for further development, which will be available early in 1987. The honourable member mentioned that earlier.

A consultant's report was commissioned on the development of the Emery Hills area.

Mr Bell: Very thin, Nick.

Mr DONDAS: The member for MacDonnell did not speak about any of the orderly planning; all he spoke about were vistas and saucers.

Plans in respect of the development along the Stuart Highway south of the Gap are being prepared for public display. These are being redrafted at the moment and we are awaiting submissions from other departments. The Department of Transport and Works is assisting in the preparation of a management plan for the CBD. Significant time and resources have been devoted to flood mapping, and warning systems are being developed. One aspect of the implementation of the CBD strategy plan is the work that is currently being done on the reconstruction of the Todd Mall. The Department of Transport and Works has carried out a tunnel study and Gary Hunt and Associates also undertook a study in 1980. There was the Pak Poy study into strategies for the development of Undoolya. This morning, the honourable member did not mention Undoolya once, but he has had plenty to say about it outside the Assembly through press releases.

A study of Larapinta was conducted in 1984 which formed the basis of existing development. In 1984, the member was carrying on about the lack of development in Larapinta and what the government intended.

Mr Ede: Mr Speaker, do you agree with that behaviour on the part of the minister?

Mr DONDAS: I am not worried about behaviour. You read what you said in Hansard.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There are far too many interjections. I will again remind all honourable members that the member on his feet will be heard in silence, and will address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr DONDAS: Yes, Mr Speaker. I remind honourable members to read the Hansard record of the debate in 1984 and see what was said about orderly planning. It is all in place now. The opposition members are not interested in that. All they want to do is talk about vistas, height restrictions and a load of other nonsense that has nothing to do with a discussion on a matter of public importance. You can shake your head all you like because you will not get any sympathy from me.

Let us talk about Undoolya and Emily Hills and what is happening in that area. In 1985, there were 3 options for the future growth of Alice Springs. We distributed some brochures and called for public comment. Of course, we are now looking urgently at which way we should go in regard to the Undoolya option and the Emily farms option. There are options. The Leader of the Opposition laughs. I can remember when he sat in this Assembly and condemned the government's decision to move to Palmerston. He had the same smirk on his face when we were going through the legislative process to establish the Palmerston Development Authority so that the orderly growth of Darwin could occur. The same kind of smirk is on his face today when it is suggested that Undoolya or Emily Gap may be developed in 5 years time. At least, we are talking about it now.

The member for Flynn has been speaking about it for 5 years. Of course, at times, it is necessary to change one's stance. We were all hot to trot for Undoolya. At the moment, Undoolya could be the best option, but there are development proposals for the Emily Gap area. If that is cheaper for the government and more convenient for the residents of Alice Springs, why shouldn't the government examine those options? Why should we rush in at 100 miles an hour because people such as the members opposite want the government to fall flat on its face so they can say, 'we told you so'. Orderly development involves planning and areas to accommodate 30 000 to 40 000 people cannot be planned in 5 minutes. I am quite sure the members of the opposition realise that. Palmerston will provide for Darwin's future for the next 10 to 15 years. I can remember members opposite laughing when we said that it would have a population of about 5000 within 3 years. They said that it would never happen. It already has 5000 people.

We were talking about the meeting on 11 November and the honourable member commented that people were not being given enough time to consider the proposal. He also implied that the Planning Authority did not have enough time to consider all the submissions, that it had closed at 6 pm and that the chairman, who was a CLP candidate for the Senate, made a very quick decision. I am advised that all members of the Planning Authority had the opportunity to consider the objections and to go through the submissions in great detail before making a decision. That was borne out by a statement made by Alderman Lyn Peterkin:

I must take Mayor Oldfield to task for her pronouncements on the Town Planning Authority's decision to allow the 5-storey extension to Lasseter's Casino. Anyone is entitled to his or her opinion but to suggest that proper consideration was not given to the matter is irresponsible. As a member of that authority, I read and considered every submission and signature on the petitions. I weighed up all the arguments for and against the proposal, taking into account the views of the community as expressed to me directly and also taking into account the legal limitations of the Town Planning Act and the Alice Springs Town Plan. If any other member did not avail themselves of the time and information to consider all aspects, then that should not limit the decision-making of those who did. Personal views on architectural styles cannot be part of the consideration. There are a number of buildings in this town, which I think are appalling but other members of the community consider attractive, which I approved at a Planning Authority meeting because there was no proper and legal planning ground for rejecting the proposal.

This is only a development application. The plans have still to be submitted for consideration. The same 4 members of the Alice Springs Town

Council will make the decision. Grant Tambling may not be the acting chairman on the day because Mr Willing is back on deck. More importantly, the point that we have been trying to make is that, in relation to any plans for development in Alice Springs, locally-elected representatives make the decision. That applies not only in Alice Springs but also in Darwin, Katherine and Tennant Creek. Some councils are calling for more responsibility and that will be the subject of consideration early in 1987.

The locally-elected representatives of the area are au fait with the community's needs. Anybody can read the newspapers and press releases from both sides of the Assembly and then make up his own mind about a proposal. To suggest for 1 moment that the acting chairman, Grant Tambling, rushed the decision through for political expedience really is a disgusting proposal. From his interjections, we could tell what the member for Nhulunbuy was thinking. Nevertheless, the decision was made for the locals by the locals. At the same time, the government is planning for the orderly development of Alice Springs.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS (COMPENSATION) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 241)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Communications and Technology): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The object of this bill is to provide an urgent amendment to 2 definitions in the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act and to make consequential amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act to enable the Northern Territory to participate in the Commonwealth Interstate Road Haulage Scheme from 1 January 1987. That scheme has been established by the Commonwealth government to provide a uniform, Australia-wide registration scheme for motor vehicles engaged in interstate trade and commerce. A requirement of this scheme is that all vehicles registered under it must have an insurance policy that insures the owner or driver against all liability in respect of death or injury to any person arising out of the use of the vehicle in any state or territory. At present, such indemnity is provided under the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act. The power to levy such a contribution at the time of registration is contained in a separate act, the Motor Vehicles Act.

The bill amends the definitions of 'an accident' and 'a Territory motor vehicle' in section 4 of the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act to recognise the Northern Territory's participation in the road haulage scheme from 1 January 1987, and to ensure that Territorians continue to be indemnified under the act. Section 4 of the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act defines 'a Territory motor vehicle', for the purposes of an accident occurring in the Northern Territory, as a motor vehicle owned by a resident of the Territory and not currently registered outside the Northern Territory. For accidents occurring outside the Territory, it is defined as a motor vehicle currently registered under the Motor Vehicles Act, not being a 'non-registered vehicle' in the place where the accident occurred. The Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act also, in part, defines 'accident' in relation to an accident within the Territory as an occurrence, other than on a public street, caused by a Territory vehicle on which a compensation contribution under the Motor Vehicles Act has been paid.

With these definitions, Territorians who elect for registration under the uniform registration scheme rather than under the Motor Vehicles Act would not

be indemnified under the Northern Territory's Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act. Not only would MACA benefits not be payable, but also the owner or driver of such a vehicle would be technically in breach of the Commonwealth legislation. In order to ensure continued protection for Northern Territory residents who register under the interstate transport scheme from 1 January 1987, it is necessary to amend part of the definition of 'accident' and also the definition of 'a Territory motor vehicle' as quickly as possible to extend those definitions to cover Northern Territory vehicles registered under the Commonwealth's Interstate Road Transport Act 1985.

Secondly, the bill makes consequential amendments to sections 45 and 47 of the Motor Vehicles Act. Section 45 requires that a compensation contribution must be paid prior to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles being able to grant or renew vehicle registrations in the Northern Territory. This bill amends this section of the act to ensure that such an obligation to pay a compensation contribution is also applicable to vehicles seeking registration or re-registration in the Northern Territory under the Commonwealth's Interstate Road Transport Act 1985, thus paralleling the requirements for vehicles registered under the Northern Territory's own Motor Vehicles Act.

Section 47 of the act provides that the Treasurer may specify the rates of compensation contributions payable in respect of registrations. The amendments to section 47 will have the effect of allowing a different compensation contribution to be charged in respect of those vehicles registered under the Commonwealth scheme if and when the need to do so arises. At this stage, it is intended that the applicable compensation contribution will be equivalent to the contribution required on vehicles registered under the Motor Vehicles Act. However, it is desirable to have flexibility in this area if, in future, a greater risk of exposure is found to exist under the Interstate Road Transport Act 1985.

This bill has the effect of recognising Territory vehicles registered under the Commonwealth scheme and provides an obligation to pay a Northern Territory compensation contribution at the time of registration, thus ensuring continued coverage for benefits under the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act.

Debate adjourned.

#### TRAFFIC AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 240)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is twofold: to upgrade the Northern Territory drink-driving provisions and to upgrade the traffic infringement notice provisions, particularly the penalties.

The bill makes it an offence for persons under the age of 18 years and others with learner and provisional licences to drive with alcohol in their blood. This will bring the Territory law into line with that in the states. All states already have zero or 0.02 alcohol requirements. The zero alcohol requirement serves a number of road safety purposes. It helps to separate new drivers from drinking. This will help to reduce the risk of alcohol compounding the problems of inexperience. It will also encourage new drivers, from the start, to develop a habit of not driving after drinking and to

arrange their social activities accordingly. It will also mean that persons regaining a licence after a drink-driving offence, or another offence resulting in the loss of a licence for 3 months or more, will have to conform with the same requirements. That is, because of the provisional status of their new licence, they will have to ensure for 12 months that they do not drive at all after drinking.

I point out that while the bill will make it an offence for those covered to drive with alcohol in their blood, the police will be working to a 0.02 blood alcohol content limit initially. This will put to rest the often misplaced concerns that alcohol from cough mixtures or other medicines might lead to an offence. I say 'misplaced' because my advice is that there is no legitimacy in those concerns. A great deal of potent medicine would be needed to cause a positive reading.

Penalties for exceeding zero alcohol level are the same as for exceeding 0.08. A first offence will be subject to a maximum penalty of \$500 or 6 months imprisonment. It will also incur an automatic licence loss of 3 months. These penalties are not inconsistent with current state penalties. The penalties for 0.08 and more serious drink-driving offences are, however, to be examined further as a part of a major review of the whole Traffic Act which is now nearing completion.

The bill also removes the option of a licence suspension from the Traffic Act. This will mean that the court must cancel a licence and nominate a minimum time before a new licence can be sought. This will restore the situation that existed until October 1984. Prior to that date, all persons losing a licence for 3 months or longer for drink-driving offences were required to obtain a new licence. This was stopped only because of legal advice that the practice was inconsistent with the legislation.

The bill updates the traffic infringement offence provisions by simplifying the administration. The police will no longer be required to have all the offences printed in the tickets they issue. However, they will still have to write in the offences so the offender knows what he is being charged with. The offences themselves have been updated and the penalties significantly altered to reflect current values better. The current penalties were set in 1977.

The bill also removes the current ban on retaining a record of infringements and payment of infringement fines. The Northern Territory is the only part of Australia which has this ban. It means that drivers who come under police attention regularly are normally charged only with respect to the action under attention, with no account taken of their overall record. The change does not go as far as the introduction of a points merit system but it will provide a starting point for better information on driver performance, and will enable more attention to be given to those drivers who show a persistent pattern of traffic law violation.

I might add that the measures in this bill are the beginning of a series of steps to upgrade traffic and driving licence provisions to reflect the government's aim of encouraging better performance on the roads. I would emphasise that, important as such measures are, the final responsibility must go back to the individual who, in the final analysis, is responsible for most accidents. Legislation such as this helps to identify what desirable road practice is and to improve the effectiveness of the application of government and private resources to road safety education and enforcement. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

CROWN LANDS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 231)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

It is not often that one has the opportunity to introduce amendments concerning what is perhaps the oldest statutory authority existing in the Territory. I refer to the Northern Territory Land Board. I consider that a brief resume of the history of the board will be of interest to members before I address the contents of the bill.

The first reference to the formation of a pastoral land authority is to be found in the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1912 which established the principle of leasehold tenure. That ordinance provided for the establishment of a Land Classification Board which classified the land before it was offered for leasing. Classified pastoral and agricultural land had to be advertised and the leasehold was granted by the board to that applicant who, in the opinion of the board, was the most suitable for the development of the Territory. The board comprised the Director of Agriculture, the Director of Lands and the Chief Surveyor.

The operation of the Land Classification Board caused dissatisfaction. The board did not achieve the desired aim because its classifications were inconsistent and it proved to be an irresponsible body in practice. No power of appeal against its findings existed and the magnitude of its power left the Government Resident practically powerless in the determination of rural lease conditions. With minor amendments, this ordinance remained in force until repealed by the Crown Lands Ordinance in 1923 which divided the Territory into 4 districts and laid down the annual rental to be paid for pastoral leases in each of those districts. A Land Board under the control of the minister replaced the Land Classification Board.

Consequent upon the passing of the North Australia Act in 1926, the Crown Lands Ordinance 1927 was introduced repealing the existing Land Ordinance of the Northern Territory. The Land Board was replaced by the North Australia Commission but otherwise the new ordinance retained all other features of the 1926 ordinance.

Subsequently, in 1931, the commission was disbanded and both the Northern Territory Act 1926 and the Crown Lands Ordinance 1927 were repealed. The Crown Lands Ordinance 1931, which was the basis of the current Crown Lands Act, was in all major respects identical with the 1923 ordinance and a land board was again constituted.

In 1937, Messrs W.L. Payne and J.W. Fletcher were appointed by the Governor-General of Australia to inquire into land tenure and land industries of the Northern Territory. The Payne Fletcher Report recommended abolition of the Land Board:

The Land Board at Darwin, consisting of the Administrator and 2 other officers, need no longer be continued as it is only performing routine duties. The Administrator can fittingly exercise all the functions of the Land Board and generally act as Land Commissioner



for the Territory. He would, of course, have the advice, if he required it, of the officers of the Territory service who, with him, now constitute the Land Board. This reform would also allow the Chief Surveyor to spend more time on field duties.

Subsequently, an amendment to the 1931 ordinance was passed in 1938 which gave to the Administrator the powers of the Land Board which then ceased to operate. In 1949, the Crown Lands Act was again amended to restore the Land Board once more but with reduced powers. Due to an increased workload, the importance placed upon expeditiously processing applications within Aboriginal reserves and the accepted need for the board to be an independent advisory board, a Land Board chairman, V.E. Wasilewsky, was recruited in January 1972 and appointed on 24 May 1972 to carry out full-time board responsibilities. Mr Wasilewsky is still the Chairman of the Land Board having given 14 years of service in the position. It is with regret that I have learned that Vic is due to retire in the near future. His guidance will be missed by all concerned with the pastoral industry.

Mr Speaker, I turn now to the provisions of the bill. The Northern Territory Land Board is an administrative and not a judicial tribunal. There is nothing onerous or contentious about the proposed amendments. The membership of the board is to remain unchanged with 14 members, including the chairman and deputy chairman. The only difference with appointment of members is that now the chairman will be appointed separately from the other 13 members.

The Crown Lands Act is silent on the question of terms of appointment, provisions for reappointment and the dismissal of members. The latter can be covered by the Interpretation Act on the grounds that, where the minister has the power to do something, he has a similar power to undo that action. In effect, members are appointed until they elect to retire.

Over recent years, several pieces of Territory legislation relating to statutory authorities have been amended to provide for fixed terms of office, replacement of members who resign, reappointment of members and dismissal on the normal grounds of bankruptcy, incompetence etc. The nature of the pastoral industry in the Territory is changing. There is evidence of close settlement occurring and an increase in the number of properties undertaking agriculture and horticulture. Because of the system of appointment of Land Board members, expertise in agriculture and horticulture is confined largely to government members of the board. They would be concerned normally with their own department's assessment of such applications in the course of their duties.

The board will benefit from an infusion of new members who are keeping abreast of technical and management developments in the rural and pastoral industries. Also, as the nature of these industries changes, the proposed amendments will allow the progressive introduction of new talent. A corps of experienced members will be retained if the initial appointment of the new board is conducted in the manner of a half-senate election. It is proposed that all positions on the board be declared vacant 3 months after the commencement of the proposed amendments, that half of the membership be appointed for 3 years initially and the other half for 6 years. At the expiration of the first 3-year term, an equivalent number of retiring members will be replaced or reappointed for a further 6-year term. While shorter periods of appointment, say 2 years and 4 years, could be considered, such periods would detract from the overall expertise of the board.

It follows that the amendments should contain provision for reappointment of serving members and for replacement of members who resign or die. Such members would be appointed initially for the remainder of the term of office of the member replaced. The need for dismissal of members for bankruptcy, criminal offences, and mental incompetence, and penalties for failure to declare an interest or for disclosure of confidential information and the like is self-evident. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Araluen Arts and Cultural Trust Act Repeal Bill (Serial 246) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I appreciate that this legislation may not be very contentious but I have some difficulty in agreeing to the passage of an urgency motion before hearing the minister's reasons. I appreciate that we have been given draft copies of certain bills but the bills may or may not contain further amendments than those provided to us. I will not agree to urgency until after the minister has given his reasons for the introduction of the bill.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, for Government Business Notices Nos 4 and 5, the government withdraws the proposed motions to suspend standing orders until a later stage to give the opposition an opportunity to hear the second-reading speeches.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to withdraw my motion for urgency.

Leave granted.

#### ARALUEN ARTS AND CULTURAL ACT REPEAL BILL (Serial 246)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

All members of this Assembly will be aware of the significant addition that the Araluen Arts and Cultural Centre makes to the quality of life for people living in Alice Springs and in the central Australian region. Some members may also be aware that those who have had responsibility for the control and management of the centre, the Araluen Arts and Cultural Trust, have faced difficulties for some time. As with other such centres, Araluen's difficulties have been mainly financial. The trust has had to operate with overheads which have had a dual effect of forcing performance fees higher and increasing the amount sought from the Territory government for supplementary funding.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to sit down with members of the trust, the Friends of Araluen, and the Alice Springs Town Council. Out of these discussions, agreement was reached that a transfer of the control and management of the centre to the Alice Springs Town Council would be a sensible

long-term arrangement. The council and the trust have now settled on an agreement. This agreement entails, in part, that the council will control and manage the centre through the establishment of a management committee pursuant to the Local Government Act. The membership of the management committee will be drawn from those groups now represented on the trust. Thus, the interests of the people of the region will be represented in 2 ways: first, by the method of appointment of the management committee; and, secondly, by the normal democratic representation reflected in the Alice Springs Town Council itself.

Mr Speaker, the Araluen centre is a considerable asset. It is important to the Territory government that it be operated for the benefit of the people of the Alice Springs region, and that the operation of the centre not become an unreasonable drain on Territory taxpayers. The transfer of control and management of the centre to the Alice Springs Town Council will allow for the achievement of economies of scale in the operations of the centre and, therefore, reduce the potential for requests for increases in supplementary funding from the Territory government.

Whilst this matter has been under consideration for some time, it has only today been placed before the Assembly. The need for the urgent passage of this bill arises from the necessity to remove this burden from members of the trust quickly and to maximise the economies which can be achieved through the transfer of the council. The bill will provide for the continuation of the activities of the centre for the people of the Alice Springs region.

Clause 6 will allow the council to operate outside its municipal boundaries, without reference to the minister, pursuant to the Local Government Act. The bill proposes that all property of the trust will transfer to the council on 1 January 1987. Employment contracts have not been included in this property. I am advised that all current employees of the trust have been offered satisfactory arrangements by the Alice Springs Town Council. If, however, arrangements in this area cannot be put in place before 1 January 1987, then the continuation of the trust until 1 March 1987 should allow time for the resolution of any unforeseen difficulties.

Since its creation in 1979, the various members of the trust have made a significant contribution to the cultural life of Alice Springs. I place on record my thanks for their work in often difficult circumstances. I hope that they and all other people in the Alice Springs region will continue to support the centre. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

CRIMINAL LAW (CONDITIONAL RELEASE OF OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 242)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, this amending bill has 2 purposes: first, to reintroduce legislative provisions relating to remission of fines and sentences; and, secondly, to introduce a scheme so that fine defaulters can be placed on community service. The proposed legislation has been developed with the assistance of the Attorney-General.

Honourable members will be aware that, by virtue of the Criminal Code Act, the Criminal Law and Procedure Act was repealed. Sections 56, 57 and 58 of that act dealt with matters concerning the remission of sentences and fines. Those provisions no longer exist in Territory legislation. However, the repeal of those provisions did not and does not mean fines and sentences can no longer be remitted in the Northern Territory. It should be noted that section 389 of the Criminal Code provides that nothing in that code affects the prerogative of mercy. The prerogative exists without the need for statutory enactment. It is considered that the exercise of the prerogative of mercy includes with it the power to remit sentences and fines, it being 1 of the 3 recognised forms of pardon, the others being the absolute pardon and the conditional pardon.

Consequently, upon the introduction of the code, it was considered unnecessary to retain provisions of the Criminal Law and Procedure Act. On reflection, however, at least in respect of the power to remit sentences and fines, it is now considered appropriate that specific legislative provisions exist. While the exercise of the prerogative of mercy is not used frequently, when it is used in the Territory, its most common application concerns the power to remit sentences. That being the case, it is considered best that the power to remit exist in legislative form.

The prerogative of mercy is somewhat shrouded in mystery and confusion exists as to its operation. In my opinion, the reintroduction of specific legislation will help avoid some of that confusion if and when a sentence or fine is to be remitted. The reintroduced provision will provide a readily identifiable source of power and allow for the speedy implementation of that power. I consider the interests of justice will be best served by its reintroduction.

Turning to the specific amendments, clause 5 introduces new part IIIA. It is considered that the power to remit can now be best dealt with in the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Act as, in a sense, the remission of a sentence is similar to a conditional release. Proposed new section 8A enables the Administrator to remit sentences. Sentences may be remitted with or without conditions. It further allows the Administrator to vary or revoke conditions, add conditions or revoke the remission of a sentence. It allows for a police officer to arrest, without warrant, a person who breaches the conditions of release or whose remission has been revoked, and allows for a JP to issue a warrant for the same purpose. Where a person has been arrested after revocation of that person's licence, a magistrate must commit the person to serve the remainder of his sentence. In short, the bill provides for exactly what was provided for in the Criminal Law and Procedure Act, including the power to remit fines, penalties or forfeiture due to the Crown.

The intention behind the amendments relating to fine default is twofold. First, it allows fine defaulters and potential fine defaulters to perform community service work as an alternative to having to go to prison for non-payment of fines. As the legislation now stands, fine defaulters are not eligible for the community service order scheme. Secondly, the amendments provide for streamlined procedures for breach action and imprisonment where breach of a community service order has been proven. It is confidently anticipated that a workable and meaningful community service order scheme, which will operate for the benefit of all Territorians, will be the result.

In 1985-86, over one-third of the people admitted to Territory prisons were fine defaulters; that is, 644 people went to jail for no reason other

than non-payment of fines or, in a few cases, defaulting on estreatment orders. Of those, 55 were women. About 25% of all prison inmates were employed at the time of imprisonment so a proportion of fine defaulters would have had jobs when they went to jail which they subsequently lost. Over one-third were married. The trend has continued into this financial year. In July 1986, the daily average number of fine defaulters held in prison was 26. Total prisoner holdings for the same month were 401, on a daily average basis. Our prisons at that time were designed for 320 inmates. The implications of this will not be lost on honourable members when I point out that, currently, the cost of building 1 new prison cell is \$100 000, and it costs in excess of \$90 a day to keep a prisoner.

There are 2 main reasons why people default on paying their fines. A small minority chooses not to pay and accepts imprisonment as an alternative. The others simply do not have the capacity to pay. Whatever their reasons, I think it is preferable that, as a community, we stop jailing people who are otherwise productive and useful members of society. I do not need to emphasise that jail is not a desirable place to be. The effects of imprisonment on a person cannot be gauged, but the negative effects generally outweigh all benefits. We do know that the cost factors are significant. Apart from the \$90 per day it costs to keep a prisoner, other factors must be taken into account, such as the enormous cost to our courts and our police force in terms of financial and human resources employed in issuing and executing warrants. Also relevant is the impact upon the business sector when people are no longer consumers because they are in prison. In many cases, the community bears the cost of welfare support for the families of those imprisoned. The community is fully entitled to protection from offenders and, in some cases, there is no alternative to prison. On the other hand, where alternatives to prison are possible, we have a responsibility to make them available.

As I said earlier, 644 persons were jailed last financial year for fine default. They were people the courts regarded as posing no risk to the community and saw fit to impose fines on rather than prison terms. We have a situation, therefore, where 644 members of our community have ended up in jail, even though the courts deemed prison sentences to be inappropriate for their offences.

There is more to be said for a scheme which diverts fine defaulters away from prison than that it is in the best interest of defaulters, their families or even their employers. We all benefit from such a scheme. The community service order program, as it operates in the Territory at present, has seen 668 offenders participating. Since its introduction in 1979, communities across the Territory have shared the benefit of some 46 000 hours of unpaid community service work. More than three-quarters of the offenders placed on the program completed their orders successfully. Some continued to work for organisations on a voluntary basis after discharging their obligations under court orders. This alone demonstrates the value of such programs. The scheme is simply good sense.

In introducing new elements of the community service order scheme in the Territory, we will break new ground. While Tasmania can allow fine defaulters to carry out community work, I understand that that scheme is different to what is proposed here, and is little used. Recently, Victoria has introduced a scheme with the same objectives as this one, but the Victorian scheme would not fit the Territory situation. It is reported to place too great a burden on the courts.

The scheme proposed by this legislation will permit persons who are fined to apply to the Director of Correctional Services to perform unpaid community work instead of paying the fine. Under the Victorian scheme, a person fined has to appear before the court where he was fined to avail himself of this alternative. In the Northern Territory, that would be unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. It imposes a considerable extra burden on the courts' time and resources, both of which may otherwise be put to better use. Further, unless the matter comes before the same magistrate or judge, all the facts of the case may have to be put to the court again so that the issue can be determined. It is widely accepted within the courts that it is not a desirable practice for one magistrate to review another magistrate's decision. The Director of Correctional Services has responsibility for the existing community service order scheme and the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Act requires a probation officer's report on the suitability of an offender before a community service order is made. I refer here to section 21 of the principal act.

This legislation continues to make the community service order option available to the courts. As well, it provides the avenue I have mentioned for offenders to apply to the Director of Correctional Services to perform unpaid work in settlement of fines. Provisions for safeguarding the community, such as probation or parole officer assessment of offenders, remain an integral part of the scheme. The legislation provides fully for community protection, recompense and deterrence and will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the community service order program. I will touch on these issues again when dealing with the specific provisions of the bill.

In addressing the fine default aspect of the bill itself, the first substantive amendment is to clause 6. Clause 6(a) removes an obvious barrier to the scheme. In clause 6(b), however, the time for which a person may be required to work at community service has been extended from 240 hours to 480 hours. While this may appear to be a significant increase in the penalty which may be imposed, it will allow the courts wider opportunities to exercise the community service order option than in the past. This recognises that community service orders are not merely another sentencing option but a legitimate alternative to prison in their own right.

Clause 7 effects some minor amendments to section 21 of the principal act. The change of reference from Crown Solicitor to director reflects the reality of the situation in which the Director of Correctional Services deals directly with these matters.

Clause 8 introduces new provisions forming the basis of the extended scheme. Proposed new section 21A allows an offender who has been fined or who has defaulted on payment of a fine to apply to the Director of Correctional Services for approval to perform unpaid community service work in lieu of payment of the fine. Further, new section 21A(7) provides for the release from prison, subject to the making of a community service order, of an offender imprisoned for fine default only. This will not be possible if that person is in prison for other offences as well.

Before making an order allowing a person to perform unpaid work in lieu of a fine under the proposed new section 21A(3), the director must be satisfied that the person is suitable, that there are arrangements in place for the offender to perform approved work, and that the offender consents to the terms and conditions of the order. In addition, the director is required to ensure that the offender understands fully the implications of the order and the consequences of not complying with the terms and conditions. Honourable

members will note that similar criteria operate in respect of court-imposed orders under the principal act and will continue to apply. In administering the existing scheme, the Director of Correctional Services and his professional staff have demonstrated adequate expertise and ability to undertake the responsibilities inherent in this provision.

Proposed section 21B decrees that the aggregate number of hours that the director may order is 470, which is consistent with new provisions in section 20 of the act as amended by clause 6(b). By virtue of the new section 21B(3), persons who have been imprisoned as a result of fine default and who are released subsequently subject to community service orders may have the period served in prison taken into account at a prescribed rate in assessing the number of hours of unpaid work to be performed. It is preferable that this be a prescribed rate rather than a figure fixed in legislation as it facilitates adjustments to the rate as circumstances change in the future.

Members may be aware that, under the Justices Act, the cut-out rate, as it is called, or the precise period of imprisonment to be served to satisfy a fine, is 1 day in prison for each \$10 fine or part thereof or a rate determined by the court. In practice, at present courts are using a rate of 1 day for each \$25. Without making any commitment on it, I understand that this may change to 1 day for each \$50. These matters are presently under discussion with the Attorney-General. However, members will appreciate the need for a rate which can be varied readily.

Although I shall deal with these issues again later, I might interpose here that the proposed cut-out rate to work off a fine under an order made by the director, also to be a prescribed rate, is 8 hours work for each \$100 of the fine or part thereof. Thus people can work for the benefit of the community rather than languish in prison at a cost of more than \$90 per day to the community.

This government is not in the business of providing free board and lodging, nor does it want to see people end up in jail when the court has already deemed this inappropriate by virtue of having imposed fines rather than prison terms. I would add here that probation and parole services have been extended to many of the remote communities as well as to main population centres. Probation and parole officers are now present in communities such as Alyangula, Papunya, Port Keats and Tennant Creek. Other outlying districts continue to be serviced by probation and parole officers from the bigger regional centres. Consequently, these new proposals would enable the scheme to operate in virtually any part of the Territory. I will be promoting this scheme in these areas and extending the program to other localities.

Proposed new section 21C makes provision for a person performing community work as an alternative to paying fines to apply to the court that imposed the fine to pay out the balance. Simply put, a person may opt out of completing the required number of hours under an order made by the director by paying to the court the unsatisfied portion of the fine. If a person so chooses, the period of unpaid work performed will be taken into account when assessing the balance of the fine to be paid. Again, this will be calculated at a rate to be prescribed.

Proposed new section 21D deals with breaches of community service orders made by the director and the consequences of that. This section is linked to new section 25 which sets conduct and behavioural standards for offenders on community service orders. Powers conferred on the director by proposed

section 21D relate only to orders he makes. Under particular circumstances, he may revoke such an order and serve notice of revocation upon the offender and on the court which originally imposed the fine.

Nothing in this section provides the director with powers normally regarded as the prerogative of the courts nor does the section in any way detract from the powers of the court. In other words, an offender who has been fined and opts to perform community work instead of paying the fine, and who has agreed to enter into an order made by the director, and who then fails to comply with the terms of that order, can expect the order to be cancelled. This places the offender back in the position he was in prior to entering into the director-made order. He is obliged to pay the fine, seek time to pay or default in payment. In any case, he becomes subject to fine recovery action again under the provisions of the Justices Act.

I draw members' attention to proposed new section 21D(4) which provides that, in circumstances where the director revokes an order made by him, the offender becomes liable for the total amount of the fine imposed originally; that is, no credit is given in these circumstances for any work which has been carried out by the offender under that order.

In the case of a person who has been released from prison on a community service order and subsequently who breaches the terms and conditions of that order, notification to the court of the director's revocation of the order is sufficient to reactivate the original warrant leading to rearrest and return to prison. Again, under these circumstances, no credit accrues to the offender for work which he has performed. These provisions will provide a positive incentive to offenders to discharge their obligations under community service orders.

Clauses 9, 10 and 11 make minor amendments which are self-explanatory. Clause 12 repeals section 25 of the principal act and new section 25 is substituted. It deals with those issues which would constitute a breach of an order. Through reference to new section 21D, the same rules of conduct apply to offenders under an order imposed by the court or an order made by the director. Essential differences lie in the method of dealing with breaches of orders, and the consequences of a breach. Different sanctions apply in respect of court-made orders and orders made by the Director of Correctional Services.

I have already outlined how the director may revoke an order made by him, and the effects upon the offender. Under new section 25(2), breach of the court-imposed order must be referred to a justice who, depending on the circumstances, may issue a summons or a warrant. The matter would then be heard in the court. Under new section 25(5), where a breach of a court-imposed order is proved to the satisfaction of the court, the penalty is to be imprisonment on the basis of 1 day in prison for each 8 hours or part thereof of work not performed or 7 days imprisonment, whichever is the greater. I consider this to be an important provision. At the time of consenting to the court imposing a community service order, the offender is aware of his other rights and obligations and the consequences of any breach of the order. The order is an alternative to imprisonment. The offender has the right to refuse consent.

This provision will provide a strong deterrent to those who may otherwise renege on their obligations. It will act as a positive incentive to offenders to complete an order successfully and it will provide an equitable sanction in every case of breach of an order imposed by the court. Additionally, by



virtue of the provisions of new section 25(7), the court retains the right to deal with offenders for the original offence and may take into account the term of imprisonment imposed for breach of the order or any unpaid work which may have been done by the offender. This reflects the provisions of section 27 of the principal act.

Clause 13 effects some minor amendments which should be self-explanatory. Clause 14 repeals sections 27 to 30 which are no longer necessary in the light of new provisions in new section 25 and new section 27 in relation to compensation for injury. New section 27 deals with workers' compensation and is designed to protect the offender against undue financial disadvantage should he be injured as a result of working under an order.

Clauses 15 and 16 deal with minor issues which again will be self-explanatory.

Mr Speaker, might I add that regulations are being drafted and administrative arrangements are now being put in place. With the new legislation in force, everyone fined by a court in the Territory will be made aware of the community service order options as an alternative to going to prison should their circumstances prevent them from paying their fines. The Australian Law Reform Commission is on record as saying that the poor are discriminated against in the criminal justice system since they are unable to pay fines and that there should be suitable alternative sanctions. This legislation addresses that very issue.

Much of this legislation is novel to the Territory. I believe it puts us in the forefront of reform in this area not only in Australia but in most other countries in the world. The tangible effects of this scheme will be a reduction in the numbers held in prison and, hence, in the associated costs to the community, and a reduction in the workloads and costs incurred by the courts and police as a result of fine default. Additionally, there are benefits to communities through a potentially enormous number of hours of work on approved projects.

All work performed under the community service order scheme will be carried out on approved projects; that is, on projects which have been approved by a Community Service Advisory Committee appointed under the legislation. At present, 5 such committees have been appointed and operate throughout the Territory on a regional basis. Committees monitor work projects and ensure that no project is approved which would detract from paid-employment opportunities. Members of committees are serving their communities by performing their role in an honorary capacity. They represent all sectors of the community including business, local government, trade unions, sectional interest groups and Aborigines. Committees meet regularly in Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy and Groote Eylandt.

I would like to foreshadow to members of this Assembly the government's intention to pass this legislation through all stages during these sittings. The reason why this should be done is because current Northern Territory prisoner numbers are at an all-time high and reached a new peak of 456 at midnight on Tuesday 18 November 1986. This is a system peak and we are nearly 20% overloaded. The rated capacity of the existing 4 institutions is only for 370 people. During 1984 and 1985, in excess of 35% of all prisoners received into Northern Territory institutions were admitted as a result of fine default. The passage of this bill through all stages during these sittings will bring about the diversion of significant numbers of fine default prisoners and unnecessary and expensive incarceration. This is good and

progressive legislation, widely beneficial to the Territory community and humanitarian in its aims. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

TOTALISATOR ADMINISTRATION AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 233)

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 the bill is to put beyond doubt the power of the TAB to operate at premises licensed under the Liquor Act. In accordance with the Totalisator Administration and Betting Act, the board has the power to establish offices and agencies and to provide facilities for the conduct of totalisator betting. However, section 50 of the act prohibits a person from taking liquor into an office or agency and this could be seen as prohibiting the establishment of TAB outlets at licensed premises.

Elsewhere in Australia, there has been a move towards locating TAB outlets in hotels and clubs. The New South Wales government legislated in 1983 to allow such an expansion - colloquially known as PubTAB. There are now 274 hotels and licensed clubs providing a TAB service on licensed premises. In 1986, the turnover from those outlets was \$64m compared with \$26m in 1985. In Victoria, PubTAB is being introduced on a limited basis. Various Territory hotel and club licensees have requested TAB outlets at their premises because they know how compatible and successful the joint operations are elsewhere. I would add that some licensees interstate have had TAB outlets withdrawn from their premises for breaches of gaming and licensing legislation and the situation will be no different in the Northern Territory.

Additionally, there is already provision in the legislation preventing apparently intoxicated persons from betting or, indeed, remaining on TAB premises. The board strongly supports the expansion of its network into licensed premises and is well aware of the new business that such a move will attract in the Territory, as it has done elsewhere in Australia.

It will be up to the board to determine the location of any new outlets and the terms and conditions to apply to each. Until now, the board has been uneasy as to the intent of section 50 of the act and how it could be interpreted to restrict any operations in hotels or clubs. This amendment will remove any doubt and allow the board to get on with its role of providing a progressive and profitable service with increasing returns to the racing industry and the government.

Mr Speaker, I foreshadow that, during these sittings, I will move an urgency motion in relation to this bill. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 245)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Honourable members will recall that the jurisdiction of the Northern Territory's Supreme Court has been extended to include an appellate jurisdiction. As a consequence, the court has taken over certain functions previously carried out by the Federal Court of Australia. This bill amends the Stamp Duty Act to include a duty of \$150 in the charging schedule in substitution for lodgment fees previously charged by the Federal Court in civil matters. Notices of appeal in criminal matters will be exempt from the duty. The exemption is to have effect from the date the Supreme Court commenced its extended jurisdiction. This will avoid unintended stamp duty consequences. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

CREDIT UNIONS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 244)

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 has been introduced to overcome a minor technical error in the existing legislation by creating a register. The act refers to a register which the registrar can use to record registration and deregistration of credit unions. However, the act does not provide for a register or any form of registration. The amending clause removes an anomaly from the act and provides for retroactive validation for the transfer of engagements of the Nhulunbuy Cooperative Credit Society Limited to the Public Service Cooperative Credit Society (NT) Ltd.

The 2 societies approached the Registrar of Credit Unions early this year with a proposal to merge their operations. The decision to transfer the engagements of the Nhulunbuy Cooperative Credit Society Ltd to the Public Service Cooperative Credit Society (NT) Ltd served the best interests of both societies and, in particular, offered members of the Nhulunbuy society access to a wider range of services. These include access to a larger loans fund, better interest rates on deposits, insurance and travel services and Visa Card. Meetings with members of both societies drew unanimous support for the proposal.

The transfer took place on 1 October 1986. At the time of transfer, regulations prescribing statutory procedures for a transfer of engagements had not been made. They were tabled subsequently in this Assembly on 11 November 1986. The proposed amendment to validate the transfer of engagements will formalise the actions of the 2 societies and the registrar which occurred in accordance with draft regulations. It will also confirm in the minds of members of the Public Service Cooperative Society (NT) Ltd in Nhulunbuy, who were formerly members of the Nhulunbuy Cooperative Credit Society Ltd, the status of their credit society membership. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

TRESPASS BILL  
(Serial 239)

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 enact in 1 piece of legislation the law concerning criminal trespass. At present, the law concerning criminal trespass is contained in a number of places. Section 57(1)(n) of the Summary Offences Act deals with persons who trespass on enclosed premises with the intention of committing an offence. Section 91A of the same act deals with trespass on premises of the Territory. These sections are repealed by clause 3 of the bill and now appear in clauses 5 and 6.

Sections 118 and 119 of the Crown Lands Act deal with unauthorised occupation of Crown lands. These provisions are also repealed by clause 3. Under the bill, trespass on Crown land is dealt with in the same general way as trespass on private property.

Clause 7 provides that, if a person trespasses on any land, he will commit an offence if he is asked to leave that land but does not. For private property, the request to leave must be made by the occupier, as defined in clause 4, or a police officer who is acting at the request of the occupier. For trespass on Crown land, a direction to leave can be given by a person in charge of that place or a person acting pursuant to his direction. A police officer may also give a direction to leave Crown land in all cases whether requested to act by the occupier or not.

Clause 8 enables an occupier to warn a person to stay off his premises. A court may also order a person to stay off particular premises. The person who has been warned off premises commits an offence if he unlawfully trespasses on those premises after having been warned off. Clause 10 enables a police officer to arrest a person who trespasses contrary to clauses 7 or 8. He may also remove that person from the relevant premises without arresting him.

Clause 13 creates defences to charges in respect of clauses 5 to 8. In particular, it exempts a person from criminal liability for such things as trespassing in pursuit of game while hunting, or trespassing for the purposes of protecting himself or another, on his or another's property.

Clause 14 provides that the bill does not affect the existing law or the provisions of the Tenancy Act which deal with what may be termed civil trespass.

Debate adjourned.

COMPANIES (APPLICATION OF LAWS) 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.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the Companies (Application of Laws) Act to provide that offences which are prescribed offences under section 570A

of the Companies (Northern Territory) Code are regulatory offences for the purposes of the Criminal Code so that, in prosecution of those offences, it is not necessary to prove intention to commit the offence. Also, the bill will remove a technical problem in the Companies (Application of Laws) Act in relation to foreign companies that carry on business in the Northern Territory and in other Australian jurisdictions.

The Territory joined the National Companies and Securities Scheme on 28 January 1986 and legislation to implement the Territory's legislative obligations commenced operation in the Territory on 1 July 1986. I shall deal firstly with the proposal in the bill to provide that certain offences under the Companies (Northern Territory) Code are regulatory offences for the purpose of the Criminal Code.

In all states, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, the Companies Code provides that the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs, as a delegate of the National Companies and Securities Commission, can impose penalties in respect of certain offences such as failure to lodge an annual return and failure to give notice of a change of address of a registered office of a company, which are prescribed under section 570A of the code, by issuing penalty notices.

In all states and the Australian Capital Territory, the penalty notice procedure facilitates enforcement of compliance with statutory obligations under the Companies Code and the objective in the Territory is to have a procedure in line with that so that, if a company failed to comply with the relevant statutory obligation, the Corporate Affairs Office would remind it of its obligation and foreshadow a penalty notice for continued non-compliance. If the company still failed to comply, it would be issued with a penalty notice. If it then complied, the penalty notice would be withdrawn at the discretion of the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs. If, however, it still failed to comply, the Corporate Affairs office would institute court proceedings. In those court proceedings, it would not be necessary, if the proposed amendment is made, for the Corporate Affairs Office to prove that the company intended not to comply with the statutory obligation concerned.

In the Northern Territory, however, there could be difficulties in following that procedure unless the offences concerned were designated as regulatory offences for the purposes of the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code in the Territory reflects the common law principle that, before a person can be convicted of a crime, an intention to commit the crime must be proved. However, under both the Criminal Code and common law there are certain offences referred to as 'strict liability' or 'regulatory' offences in respect of which it is not necessary to prove intention. In general, these are offences which relate to matters such as public health and welfare or where statutory obligations are imposed on persons.

In other jurisdictions, the decision as to whether an offence is regulatory is made by the court. In the Territory, however, the Criminal Code provides that the responsibility rests with the legislature and, unless the legislature declares an offence to be regulatory, it cannot be treated as such by the courts. Unless such offences were designated as regulatory offences, so that intention need not be proved, the cost of enforcing such offences would be prohibitive in view of the administrative and legal action that would be required. In other Australian jurisdictions, which do not have provisions like those in the Territory's Criminal Code, the offences made regulatory by this act would be considered to be strict liability offences under common law.

In summary, if the proposed amendment were implemented, it would facilitate enforcement of the statutory obligations which are prescribed under section 570A as being subject to the penalty notices system. It would do so by facilitating implementation of the penalty notices system and prosecution of the offences concerned.

I turn now to the provision in the bill which cures a technical problem in the Companies (Application of Laws) Act relating to foreign companies which wish to carry on business in the Northern Territory and in other Australian jurisdictions. When the Companies (Application of Laws) Act was being drafted earlier this year, it was intended to provide in section 40 that, if immediately before 1 July 1986, a foreign company were registered both in the Northern Territory and in another jurisdiction that was party to the National Companies and Securities Scheme, it would be deemed to be registered in that other jurisdiction and recognised in the Territory. The effect of that would have been that its primary registration and reporting obligations would have been in 1 jurisdiction only, with information about it being accessible to other participating jurisdictions under the cooperative scheme. However, recently 3 states have drawn to the attention of Territory authorities the fact that section 40 of the present act does not achieve that objective.

The effect of section 40 in its present form is that, if a foreign company was registered both in the Northern Territory and in another scheme jurisdiction immediately before 1 July 1986, it is deemed to be registered in both jurisdictions. The consequence is that, by the combined operation of the law in the Territory and the law in the other jurisdiction in which it is registered, such a company would have to continue to duplicate its registration and reporting obligations in more than 1 jurisdiction rather than take advantage of the scheme's 'one-stop-shopping' arrangements. Therefore, the bill amends section 40 to accord with the original objective.

I add that, while the bill makes these finetuning amendments to the Companies (Application of Laws) Act, I am pleased to be able to say that the complex package of Territory legislation enacted earlier this year to apply the national companies and securities legislation to the Territory has come through so far largely unscathed. The experience in the states was that their legislation had to be amended fairly extensively over several years following enactment in order to overcome technical problems. The Territory's legislation, however, is subject to continual review, as the Corporate Affairs Office continues with its function of implementing the National Companies and Securities Scheme in the Territory.

Mr Speaker, I foreshadow that I will be moving a suspension of standing orders to allow for the passage of this bill through all stages during these sittings.

Debate adjourned.

FUTURES INDUSTRY (APPLICATION OF LAWS) BILL  
(Serial 219)

Continued from 28 August 1986.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, this is a very dry subject. The bill that is before the Assembly is consequent upon the Northern Territory's participation in the National Companies and Securities Scheme. The Northern Territory became a participant in July this year after many years of debating the advantages or otherwise of such a move. There was a unanimous support by

the Ministerial Council for Companies and Securities, which includes a representative from the Northern Territory, for the enactment of futures industry legislation and the bill before the Assembly ensures the participation of the Northern Territory in that scheme.

The futures industry has been, and I have no doubt will continue to be, a highly controversial one. Some regulation of the industry is, in my view, essential. I believe that the cooperative approach that this bill takes to regulation is the way to go. Hopefully, the bill and the regulations resulting from it will reduce the controversy that has surrounded the futures industry until now. The bill will need to be circulated nationally to the other participants in the scheme. Having examined some of the legislation being enacted in the states, and compared it with the legislation that is before this Assembly, I do not foresee that there will be any difficulties. The opposition supports the bill.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, there is much to say about this bill beyond what was said by the member who introduced it. It is a sign that the Territory's entry into the National Companies and Securities Scheme has brought with it a string of legislation which is aimed at controlling certain corporate affairs industries on a national basis. Of course, gradually the Territory is losing the distinction of being a place that is somewhat different to do business with because it has different laws. Hopefully, as the Territory moves towards statehood, it will come progressively under national legislation in these matters. To an outsider like myself, the futures industry seems to be very close to a gambling industry. It is one in which people have lost a great deal of money through misunderstanding and, no doubt, other people have won a great deal of money. On the surface, it seems to me to be, in effect, legalised gambling. However, there is nothing particularly wrong with that.

In introducing this legislation, the minister very wisely warned people to be cautious about dabbling in the futures industry unless they knew something about it or were prepared to seek some professional and expert advice on the subject. Whilst it may look pretty easy, and no doubt it is pretty easy to get into, it has a reputation already for having burnt the fingers of many people.

Of course, this legislation is necessary in the Northern Territory. We need to control these sorts of matters to ensure that there are no strange practices developing in the Northern Territory, relative to other areas in Australia. For that reason I support the bill.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, honourable members have been quite short in their comments. It is a fact that this particular piece of legislation is part and parcel of our responsibility to ensure that we have uniform legislation with the rest of the country in relation to the futures industry.

As the member for Fannie Bay pointed out, it is an area that is fraught with danger, and I think he hit the nail on the head when he described the industry as something of a gamble. It started quite a few years ago as hedging on future commodity prices and has grown into quite a considerable industry. I thank members for their comments.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendment agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

SILICOSIS AND TUBERCULOSIS (MINE-WORKERS AND PROSPECTORS)  
AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 227)

Continued from 28 August 1986.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to advise that the opposition supports the bill. The amendments are admirable and should allow for more practical administration of the program. However, I would like to make 2 comments about this particular program.

We know that people suffering from the effects of asbestos particles are often not diagnosed until well after they cease to be employed at their work places or in risk areas. Some diseases caused by asbestos particles take many years to manifest themselves. For this reason, I would like to see an ongoing observation program to monitor the health of those no longer employed in or associated with high-risk areas, and ongoing monitoring of dust-exposure levels. Where these levels change significantly, the frequency of medical examinations should be altered accordingly. I make these comments in good faith and trust that the Minister for Health will take action to ensure that those matters are examined.

Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the bill.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased the opposition supports this bill which obviously gives far more appropriate flexibility in the monitoring of the effects of dust particles on workers. Those who have had experience in mining or other industries where dust is a concern to the health of workers would be aware that many factors are involved. From my experience in respect of silicosis it is not simply a matter of the frequency of exposure to dust but, more importantly, of the size of particles and their presence in the atmosphere adjacent to where workers are breathing.

I mention that specifically because, in my younger days, I was involved at one time in tunnel works where there was a minimal amount of silicone present in the base rock. Following a visit from a departmental health inspector, considerable concern was expressed about the high level of the count of dust particles. As it turned out, whilst that concern might have been properly based in the interest of workers, it provided an unnecessary interruption whilst the test was in progress. The inspector failed in a number of areas. He failed to identify that he needed to take account of the size of the dust particles, which was of concern and posed a potential threat to workers' lungs. Secondly, he did not check the silicone content. As members may know, not all dust is deleterious to health. In fact, in most cases, dust is rejected by the lungs and disposed of by the body along with other wastes. Thirdly, and more importantly, this particular inspector was out to prove that there was a higher dust count in the first place, and he simply took a count of dust alongside the exhaust of the machinery inside this particular tunnel. This was quite some distance from where workers were actually breathing. I mention this case because it typifies the misuse of proper safety control mechanisms.

This amendment provides for sensible interpretation, by those in responsible positions, of the frequency of testing. Testing is to be by x-ray and obviously a high rate of these tests might be far more deleterious than the alleged dust that people are concerned about. In the Northern Territory



we have many mines which are located quite some distance from the major centres. The amendments give a power of delegation to the Chief Medical Officer so that he can utilise the services of private practitioners. That makes good sense on behalf of the workers. This is certainly a sensible piece of legislation and I acknowledge the support of the opposition and also commend the minister's initiative in having this legislation brought forward.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this bill but I would hate the government to get carried away with the level of that support and believe that we have become converted to its cause altogether. We are supporting this issue only because it is a move in a marginally better direction. As I have said before, there are many areas across the whole range of worker health and safety in which this government has proved not only that its legislation is deficient but also that the government is deficient in the administration of the legislation that it has already. Its bureaucratic structures are deficient and, all in all, it is doing a thoroughly poor job.

I believe that the use of the Chief Medical Officer in this context - and this applies also to the Mining Act - is an anachronism which goes back to the days before self-government when we did not have ministers in this Assembly, and various responsibilities were placed upon senior public servants through legislation. It is anachronistic that, 8 years later, as we move towards statehood, this government has yet to introduce legislation which would introduce full government responsibility into the Northern Territory. In this legislation, the responsibility still lies with the Chief Medical Officer. In any of the states, the requirement to exercise that responsibility would be on the minister or his delegate.

I raised this before in relation to the shameful case of mercury poisoning at Warrego. In that case, the problem was traced to a chief mining inspector, and the Chief Medical Officer was involved as well. There was some doubt about our ability to pursue the issue in this Assembly because the person concerned was not a member of this parliament. Under the legislation, the responsibility has been taken out of the hands of the minister and placed in the hands of a public servant. That is completely anachronistic. The whole point of responsible government is that there are various ministers responsible for various functions of government. They are answerable for those functions to this Assembly. Yet, we still have this reference to the Chief Medical Officer and his responsibilities, rights and obligations.

I have no doubt that the Chief Medical Officer will carry out his functions to the very best of his ability and in a straightforward and honest way but, if we have a problem with his performance of that function in a particular case, who do we go to? We cannot call the Chief Medical Officer before the bar of the Assembly. At the same time, the minister can say that it is not his responsibility. Before the government reacts too negatively to that, I will remind it that that reasoning was used by the member for Barkly, in his former capacity as Chief Minister, to avoid responsibility for some of the events connected with the mercury poisoning fiasco at Warrego.

Whilst members of the opposition support this bill, we would like to point out that there is a long way to go. The government still needs to do a bit more homework, and to look at some of the very progressive legislation that is being enacted in states like Victoria and South Australia. New South Wales has also done some very good work in this area. I would ask the minister to have another look at this matter and bring back to us a more comprehensive and modern piece of legislation which will bring responsible government into this function and, in addition, provide more effectively for the safety of workers in the Northern Territory.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, this bill probably has more application in my electorate than in any other in the Northern Territory because the disease known as silicosis is consequent upon the inhalation of silicone, a substance which is very much part of the mining operation in Nhulunbuy on the Gove peninsula.

The bill reduces the number of x-rays that a person in an at-risk area is obliged to have. Instead of being an annual requirement, it becomes biennial. After speaking to the radiologist and various people involved in the field of occupational health, I am convinced that this is a good idea. They all agree with the measure because the testing for silicosis problems via x-rays, if conducted more regularly than is presently required, would be potentially more dangerous than the chance of contracting silicosis itself.

Having said all that, the incidence of silicosis and the rate of exposure to potentially hazardous working conditions is in itself an indictment of the government. The fact that there is a necessity at all for x-rays is an indictment of governments throughout Australia. The degree to which workers' health can be compromised in the search for greater and greater profits is a sad reflection upon our society. However, given that our society is not prepared to protect the health of people who contribute to the wealth of this country - and the miners are among those who contribute to the wealth of this country - certainly this legislation is required, and that is why the opposition is supporting it.

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions and I would like to comment on the member for Stuart's remarks about the responsibility of the government. This government has always acted responsibly in relation to the recommendations and concerns that have been raised by various industries. For him to say that nothing has been done by this government is total nonsense.

The mining industry is extremely well controlled, and quite rightly so. We have had many debates on the concerns raised by employees in that industry in relation to mining generally and health matters. That will continue to be the case. Responsible governments will listen to what is being said by people who have a professional understanding of that industry. The Chief Medical Officer has a professional understanding and is able to make decisions. The comment made by the member for Stuart in relation to ministerial responsibility is complete nonsense. Ministers are responsible for their departments and the actions that are taken. I do not dispute that at all and I do not think any other minister disputes that he is responsible in the end.

I am very pleased that the opposition supports the amendments because they are in line with current changes in industrial health measures in relation to the needs of employees and others who are exposed in one way or another to dust and other substances. However, one would hope that the members opposite would be positive in their approach and acknowledge that there will continue to be changes and that the government will respond to changes and recommendations. I acknowledge the comments made by the member for Arnhem about the need to monitor the direction in which we are moving and to compile statistics on persons who have suffered as a result of exposure to various substances. We will continue to monitor carefully anything that may affect the health of workers in various industries.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) Bill (Serial 229) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the opposition opposes this motion. The principal reason for doing so is that, in his second-reading speech, the minister implied at least some inaccuracy. The bill does what was requested of the previous Minister for Community Development, the present Treasurer, who unfortunately is not here; that is, it introduces a flat rating system in certain wards within the Shire of Litchfield. However, I am led to understand - and I need more time to verify this - that the residents were under the impression that there would be no transitional or sunset clauses in the bill. Until the opposition has been able to verify that the minister's undertaking to the residents of the Shire of Litchfield is being honoured, we are unable to support this urgency motion. Should the urgency motion succeed, we will be obliged to oppose the bill.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, we have often been criticised by the opposition, and always quite wrongly, on the ground that we do not honour our commitments. This bill is all about doing simply that. In so far as the sunset clause is concerned, I concede that some people in the Litchfield area have been making noises recently. The Department of Community Development has absolutely no record of any conversations, requests or commitments of any kind relating to the sunset clause not being in the commitments given by my predecessor. The only recorded matter relating to the sunset clause was registered with the department on 17 October this year.

There were 2 basic commitments given by my predecessor to the people of the Litchfield Shire Council area: that the rates would be set at \$105 for RL1 and \$55 for RL2 properties and that those rates would be in place for 3 years. The rates were to be arrived at by way of what the residents referred to and understood to be a flat rate. Because that was unable to be achieved through the Local Government Act, the Northern Territory government gave a commitment to take the unusual step of introducing a bill such as this. Urgency exists for the government to fulfil a commitment and the opposition has often accused us of not fulfilling commitments.

Motion agreed to.

#### SHIRE OF LITCHFIELD (TRANSITIONAL RATING) BILL (Serial 229)

Continued from 13 November 1986.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I signalled the opposition's intentions quite clearly during debate on the previous motion. I see little point in repeating that. However, it is not clear that the minister's commitments are being honoured. We opposed the previous motion so that we could gain more time to establish that more clearly in our own minds. In the committee stage, I will be moving for the defeat of clause 2 and the removal from clause 4 of the reference to the sunset clause described in clause 2.

Mr Speaker, Litchfield is a new shire and people are moving into rural areas at an increasing rate throughout Australia. Their needs are entirely different from those of urban dwellers. Quite clearly, the residents of Litchfield have made a decision about the standard of living that they require and that is why they moved to that area. If societies are to take some note of changing needs and start listening to their citizens, it is as well to note the simple requirements at a local government level. Those citizens do not necessarily want public parks and other public facilities which urban dwellers require. They have signalled to their local government representatives what they require. It is not unreasonable to assume that they do not feel that they should have to pay for things that they will not use.

This will introduce some form of rating. However, I would certainly agree with the minister that the rates are much lower than those that urban dwellers pay. Commonwealth and NT funding to local government is assessed on the basis of effort neutrality. If local governments want to improve circumstances for their citizens, they can raise their rates to whatever level they wish. If people living in the rural area are inclined to accept a lower standard of municipal services, it should be up to them to develop their own rate levels.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I don't know where to start, but I suppose a girl has got to say what a girl has got to say. I have quite a bit to say about this. First, I wish to comment on a few points raised by the member for Nhulunbuy. I was very surprised that he did not speak longer on this as he is the opposition spokesman on local government, but no doubt he could not get the necessary information in time. Firstly, I would query his request for more time. If he paid attention to what is going on he would not need more time; he would be right up with what is going on. The ALP has been remarkable for its lack of noise on this subject. I think I have seen mention of ALP interest expressed in this issue only once in the Litchfield Times. I am very pleased to say that that was to compliment me on my comments on this same matter. I do not know whether one accepts compliments from the opposition or not.

Mr Speaker, if the ALP had been as active as it should have been, if it hopes to win the seat of Koolpinyah at the next election, there would be no need for the opposition to request more time. Opposition members would have known all the ins and outs of the question and made up their minds by now. The member commented that this rate applied in 'certain wards'. He used the words 'certain wards' rather loosely. The rates that the people want will apply to all wards, but they will apply differentially between the wards.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for introducing this legislation. To a degree, it meets the requests of the people of the rural area and fulfils the promises of the previous Minister for Community Development. Those promises were accepted by my constituents as being of some importance because they were made by a minister of the Crown.

It should be understood that the current Shire of Litchfield, did not request local government, as some other places have done. Residents have resisted local government since 1975, when the suggestion of a shire was first raised. The suggestion that a shire be formed in the rural area was raised at a public meeting called by the Darwin Rural Landholders Committee and held on a Sunday afternoon in the Wet in Rupert Kentish's hall in Wells Creek Road. I have a good memory about some things. At that time, the proposal was soundly defeated and, from 1975, the introduction of local government was resisted by the people because they wanted to do their own thing.

In those days, people were pretty touchy about heavy government control in their lives after the Darwin Reconstruction Commission took over the rehabilitation of Darwin. That was 1 of the main reasons for the initial great exodus from Darwin to the rural area. Whilst not wanting government control in their lives, people did not ask for much from the government. In the days of the Darwin Rural Landholders Association, of which I was a reasonably active member, the association asked for 1 thing only from the government. It asked that an area of land be set aside for a community reserve or a town hall. It did not receive an awful lot of help from the Town Planner of that day who, I am very happy to say, left Darwin after the cyclone and did not come back. He was one of the few people in Darwin that I ever heard of who came pretty close to being tarred and feathered, and that was at a public meeting in the rural area in 1973. The association requested some Crown land and, after discussing several options, the people decided that they would like a piece of land in the Fred's Pass area at the 22 mile. The government promised to provide 1 acre of land. Subsequently, that was increased to 37 acres and now amounts to several hundred acres.

The desire to remain free from local government control in the rural area, coupled with the compulsory acquisition of 32 square miles of freehold land there by the federal Labor government in 1973, has kept alive the spirit of Peter Lalor of the Eureka Stockade in our lives out there. I am very proud to be part of that because I believe that, if people are allowed to make decisions for other people, the general community will consist of marshmallow sort of people.

The election of shire representatives was held last December. The Darwin River Berry Springs Progress Association, together with representatives from other progress associations in the rural area, representative individuals and myself, as local member, had many meetings and made a list of things we wanted. We were told that local rating would have to raise a sum of about \$350 000. At that time, it was calculated that if the RL2 areas, which consist of 20-acre blocks and larger, paid \$55 per block and the RL1 areas, which comprise 5-acre blocks, paid \$105 per block, this sum would be realised. That calculation is about right. The people decided that if that sum of \$350 000 had to be raised, those would be the rates.

We wanted a small council that would consist initially of 3 people. I think a figure of 7 was put to us. We did a bit of bargaining. It was increased to 4 and then to 5, and we agreed to that. Residents indicated they wanted the person in charge to be known as a president, not a mayor, and the other members of the council to be known as councillors, not aldermen. The president was to be elected by the councillors. We sought this flat rate in the RL1 and RL2 areas, and said that it was to remain at the same level for 3 years. I stand to be corrected, but it is my understanding that rates in Katherine and Tennant Creek were maintained at their original level for the first 3 years of local government in those areas.

The minister said that he would not be in favour of the acquisition of large capital assets by local government and we were happy to go along with that. At present, we have a president, not a mayor, and councillors, not aldermen - although the president is not elected by the councillors - and a flat rate which will not alter over the first 3 years. We were aware that we would be 1 of the few, if not the only place in the Territory, to have a flat rate. We find now that we are the only 1, and 1 of the very few in Australia.

Numerous public meetings were held by the previous Minister for Community Development in different places in the rural area and it was explained to us

time and again that the rates we raised were to pay for the 3 Rs: roads, rubbish dumps and reserves. We reasoned, in our simple, naive, rustic fashion, that the 3 Rs would be used by the people in the rural area regardless of the size of the blocks on which they lived. I always say that we live on 320 acres. Some people have two 320-acre blocks and others have more than that in the RL2 areas. One family lives on four 320-acre blocks down Darwin River way. They use the roads at the same rate as people on a 5-acre block, they generate the same amount of family rubbish as people on a 5-acre block and they would use reserves in the same way as a family that lives on a 5-acre block. The size of the block has no connection with the rate of use of roads, reserves and rubbish dumps.

Regarding the setting of our rates under the Local Government Act, as late as 16 August 1986, the Litchfield Shire Council understood that our flat rate would be set under section 84(2) of the act. I have a paper here which shows that very clearly. Thus, it seems that the advice from the Department of Community Development has been rather confused, because that was the situation as late as 16 August.

I do not have a copy, but I believe that, on 6 August, a letter or a publication was issued by the Department of Community Development that indicated that the departmental officers knew then that it was impossible to set that rate under section 84(2). Despite this, it was not until 23 September that the Litchfield Shire Council was informed. That was only 7 days before 30 September, the date by which it had to set its rate. The shire was left with no option but to set its rate on the basis of land value. It was forced to do it. If it had not, the council stood to be dissolved, and that would have left everybody up the proverbial creek without the you-know-what. The shire set the rate, as it had to, under sections 111, 112, and 114.

The Litchfield Shire Council was very much aware of its invidious position. It made an announcement to residents which said, in part:

Your council wishes you to be aware that the Northern Territory government has failed to provide the necessary legislation to implement a flat rate for 3 years. Council has been given the unenviable task of fixing rates in the 1986-87 year utilising an assessed value which requires a calculation of unimproved capital value.

The shire was in an invidious position, but it did what it considered to be the right thing and, with hindsight, it had no alternative.

In the early stages, I did not go to the shire meetings. I felt that it could be considered interference on my part, and that I might appear to be poking my nose in. I let the council get on with the job and only went to meetings when invited. I felt it only right that the shire people should get on with their job, and they have not been doing badly to date. However, I go more regularly now.

At one council meeting, those present were informed that a letter from the Valuer-General had been received, advising that the rateable rolls - if that is the correct phrase - had all been brought up to date. My ears pricked up immediately and the alarm bells started to ring because, as soon as you start talking about the Valuer-General and rates, you are moving away from the concept of a flat rate.

A draft memorandum of understanding was drawn up on 24 August 1986 in which section 84 was mentioned as the section under which the rates would be assessed. I have copies of a draft establishment package. I cannot establish who drew it up, but I understand that it came from the Department of Community Development. Again, section 84 is mentioned as the section in the Local Government Act under which our rates shall be assessed.

There has been confusion all along the line among the councillors of the Litchfield Shire, certainly myself, and interested people who go to shire meetings. I do not know whether there has been any confusion in the Department of Community Development but, judging by the paperwork that I have here, I would not be surprised if there has. That all leads me to conclude that it is very good to see this piece of legislation introduced. It will give the shire council the power to set a flat rate for 3 years at \$105 in RL1 and \$55 in RL2 areas. This legislation was necessary to resolve the confusion. I do not know where the confusion originated or whether it was simply the result of inaccurate advice given to the previous minister. We all understood that the flat rate was possible under the Local Government Act, but it was not. Nevertheless, it will be possible under this legislation, and I am very pleased to see it.

There is 1 problem. At the end of clause 4, Declaration of Rates, it says that 'the Litchfield Shire shall declare no other rate in respect of land in those wards'. That is perhaps a little fly in the ointment because it nips in the bud a program which the Litchfield Shire Council was about to embark upon. It had resolved at a meeting that a levy would be put on all blocks subdivided in the future in the rural area. At first reading of this, I thought it was pretty socialistic. I chipped the councillors. I thought that this was not very fair because what we ain't out there is socialists.

After a little thought, it became clear that the council wanted to apply this levy because, in previous years, subdivision had taken place on the outskirts of the rural area. The roads constructed on those subdivisions were quite adequate and quite legal at the time. They were formed gravel roads. However, as more and more people came, the rural area expanded and those blocks were no longer on the outskirts. In order to reach the newest blocks, people had to travel on the gravel roads which had been provided in the earlier subdivisions. Those roads, which were adequate when the first subdivisions were made, are adequate no longer. Looking at it equitably, it is not possible to work out who is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of those roads. A subdivider cannot be expected to maintain and upgrade roads that are not in his subdivision and the shire's kitty for road making is not bottomless. The Litchfield Shire Council cannot be expected to bituminise those roads and bring them up to the heavy duty standard that is necessary. That is why the levy was to be put on those blocks. It would be used to assist in the upgrading of the roads, not only for the use of people in the old subdivisions, but for the use of people resident in the new subdivisions who travel through old subdivisions.

This legislation knocks that little idea on the head. It means that the members of the Litchfield Shire Council will have to bargain that little bit more. I do not think further legislation is necessary. I think they will just have to bargain a little bit harder for a few more dollars in the establishment package because, again, this legislation has again put them in an invidious situation. Everybody seems to have justice on his side yet it could be said that nobody has justice on his side. It is a pity that we do not have King Solomon out there to settle the matter.

Mr Dale: I am here, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The minister indicates that he is taking the job of Solomon on his shoulders. I hope that, when the Litchfield Shire Council comes to him to bargain for more money in its development package, he will look very favourably on it.

Mr Dale: What about the Grants Commission?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It does not matter where the money comes from, but it has to be found for these roads. This government has always enacted legislation in response to local needs. This legislation demonstrates that quite clearly. I would like to think that the people it is directed at will be pleased with it. Also, I would like to believe that it will be reviewed from time to time. The legislation will be in place for 3 years. I have argued with the minister, as I believe he will readily admit. I have argued with my parliamentary colleagues but, as anybody can see, I am 1 and we are 19.

Mr B. Collins: And you are now on the backbench.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: That is beside the point.

Mr B. Collins: That is what you get for arguing with your parliamentary colleagues.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I will disregard that interjection from the member for Arafura. I know what I am doing and when I argue I know what I am arguing. I know my future and I do not have my eyes closed when I act. I will have to live with myself for a long time, I hope.

This legislation will be in force for 3 years. The Litchfield Shire Council will be up for re-election before that time. At the end of the 3-year period, there will be a new council and it will be up to it to make decisions at that time. I hope that the minister will continue to be responsive to the needs of the people in the area just as he has been by bringing this legislation forward. I agree with the flat rate and I have been very vocal in saying that we want a flat rate. Do not forget that I would be among those who would be more seriously disadvantaged if the flat rate were removed. However, there may be other stories for other times. God help us if the opposition ever came into power, but have its members thought about what they would do? It is not something that is likely to happen and therefore there is no point in considering it. One only makes legislation for a reasonable period. At the end of 3 years, who knows what will happen?

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise to add my support to this legislation and to invite defeat of the opposition's amendments. This bill was brought forward for 1 fundamental reason, as the minister outlined: to honour a commitment to the residents of the Litchfield Shire that this government would ensure that there would be a flat rate, set at the specific amounts contained in the legislation, for the first 3 years of the existence of the Litchfield Shire Council. These commitments were given in the course of a number of very extensive and often heated public meetings in the Darwin rural area. I must commend the member for Koolpinyah for her tenacity in following through the cause of her constituents in respect of this matter, to ensure that the commitments of this government were honoured.



As has been outlined on a number of occasions, as a consequence of some technical difficulties with the new Local Government Act, the specific application of the act to the Litchfield Shire became impossible for the government to effect. Specific legislation had to be introduced. I might say that it is possible under existing local government legislation for the council to arrive at rates in accord with the undertakings that were made by the previous Minister for Community Development. However, that was not the specific undertaking made by the government and, by means of this legislation, we are honouring our undertaking to the Litchfield community and the constituents of the member for Koolpinyah. I commend her and the minister for their actions in taking this step.

It is recognised that this particular bill is contrary to the general thrust of our philosophical approach to local government. It is the view of this government that local government should be in a position of self-determination, particularly in respect of its own revenue-raising decisions. That position is enhanced and supported by the fact that this legislation contains a specific sunset clause. It has been placed there quite deliberately to honour the undertaking to the Litchfield Shire Council. I would ask the members of the council and the residents of Litchfield Shire to recognise that it is not my government's desire to impose any socialist control over their decision-making rights. Rather, we wish to ensure that their elected council, having worked its way through its first 3 years of operation, will then have the ability to decide how its rates will be set.

I recognise that, if the views of the Litchfield community are the same in 3 years' time as they are now, there will be incredible pressure on shire councillors to ensure that the rating system remains substantially the same. That is a decision for the Litchfield community. It is not, nor should it be, a decision for this Assembly if we are serious about the process of self-determination at the local government level.

I support the honouring of our undertaking to the Litchfield community. It demonstrates clearly our willingness to be responsive to the community's wishes. I trust that that message will go back to the Litchfield community. It specifically limits the undertaking that was given to a period of 3 years, upon the expiry of which time the right of self-determination will rest with the properly elected shire council. I commend the bill to honourable members and invite the defeat of amendments proposed by the opposition.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I want to place a couple of points on record, without going into much more detail on this legislation. I would be hypocritical if I did not place 1 fact on record: the content of this particular bill sticks right in my craw. I believe, and I am advised by people who are much wiser than I in the workings of local government and legislation ...

Mr B. Collins: That would be the vast majority.

Mr DALE: I would concede that; it is a pity that you guys don't every now and then.

The Northern Territory Local Government Act is the best local government act in Australia in that it gives local and community governments the right to make their own decisions. Democracy: that is what it is all about. I can assure all honourable members that this bill has been introduced by me for 1 reason only: to fulfil commitments made by my predecessor as minister, and by other members of this government.

I want to place on record also my complete faith in the integrity of officers of the Department of Community Development throughout the entire negotiation process involved in arriving at local government in the Litchfield Shire and the introduction of the Local Government Act, the subsequent Grants Commission Act and other legislation. Considerable emotion has surrounded the lead-up to the creation of the Litchfield Shire Council. I concede that there has been a great deal of political speculation down there from both sides of the political fence. I understand the emotions of the people in the shire. However, I will not tolerate - and I want it placed on record, be it in newspapers, by members of this Assembly or members of any local government area in the Litchfield Shire - any criticism of the integrity of officers of the Department of Community Development.

The simple fact of the matter is that residents of Litchfield Shire have nothing to worry about. They told their councillors before they elected them what they wanted as far as rates were concerned. The Litchfield Shire Council struck precisely the rate the people wanted: \$105 for RL1 and \$55 for RL2. My old mate, Blind Freddy, could see that the requirements of the people of that area have been realised even without this legislation being in place. The problem has been that emotions have been running so hot in that area that people want to see the words 'flat rate' written somewhere. Let me tell this Assembly that there is 1 good reason why flat rates are not popular around Australia in the local government area. It is a pretty simple procedure: the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. I would have thought that the opposition would have put that point forward.

Mr Leo: I agree with everything you say.

Mr DALE: Do you want me to remove the sunset clause from this bill?

Mr Leo: Yes.

Mr DALE: Do you really? Do you want a flat rate to remain there?

Mr Speaker, let me assure this Assembly that the fact that this flat rate will be in place for 3 years will cause enormous and ongoing problems in terms of costs for the future residents of the shire. I do not know of any organisation that can contemplate fixing its revenue for a period of 3 years. Not even the CPI is to be taken into consideration. It is insanity. But - and this is the 'but' that I will die at the stake for - it was a commitment of this government. For the sole purpose of getting the Litchfield Shire Council in place, those rates were agreed to. My predecessors made agreements along these lines and they will be honoured by means of this legislation.

Mr Speaker, obviously I have no intention of supporting the amendment that the opposition has proposed. Quite frankly, it amazes me that it contemplates this legislation being in force any longer than is absolutely necessary. The Litchfield Shire Council, like all community councils and municipal councils, has the power to set virtually whatever rate it wishes. It can arrive at whatever dollar amount it wants to for the rate, using the vehicle of the Local Government Act. That has been proven by the simple fact that the Litchfield Shire Council did just that.

Mr B. Collins: You do not agree with the bill. I do not agree with the amendment.

Mr DALE: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I invite defeat of this clause.

The reason for this amendment stems from the fact that this bill has been granted urgency. The opposition is of the opinion that the commitment that the minister gave was for a flat rate for the Shire of Litchfield. Whether I agree with flat rates or flat earth or flat anything does not particularly matter. It is the opinion of the opposition that the commitment that was given to the residents of Litchfield was for a flat rating system. However, the bill contains more than a flat rating system. It contains a sunset clause. The opposition opposed the motion for urgency because it does not believe that a sunset clause was part of the commitment given by the former minister. We believe that clause 2, which enunciates that sunset clause, should be defeated.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I cannot understand why the honourable member keeps harping on this urgency business. As I said, if he had had his ear to the ground as he should have had as opposition spokesman on local government, he would have known what was what and would have been able to take it all in his stride.

Mr Chairman, I oppose the amendment. This legislation will expire on 1 July 1989 which, if my calculations serve me correctly, will be in the term of the next council. Litchfield Shire Council was elected in 1985 for a 3-year term. In 1988, a new council will be elected; it may comprise the same people or it may not. I have given some consideration to this situation. I am only 1 of 19 government members and, if I voted with the opposition, I would be 1 of only 5. It would be impracticable for me to vote against the amendment. If I do something I usually do it to win, and I would not win on this occasion. I realise that there is a time to fight, but I realise also that there is a time to pull in my horns and live to fight another day. That is what I shall do.

Mr Chairman, through that sunset clause, the legislation takes cognisance of the independent spirit that prevails in the rural area. Neither the residents of the future nor the council to be elected in 1988 will be bound by this legislation.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I have already said that the rate has been struck for the Litchfield Shire area by the Litchfield Shire Council members under the Local Government Act. In my opinion, there is no need for the basic provisions of this bill. Therefore, I certainly do not agree that the rate need go on any longer than the period specified.

The bill is designed to satisfy the people of the Litchfield Shire and to honour commitments that they understood were undertaken during negotiations on the formation of the Litchfield Shire Council. Therefore, I encourage defeat of this amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Remainder of the bill taken as a whole:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, this raises an interesting point given what the minister has said about the effect on future residents of the amount collected in revenue by this council over the next 3 years. He stated that the council has restricted its options in that regard. The point I wish to make brings us back to our old friend effort neutrality. Given that the principle of effort neutrality has been embodied in the Grants Commission and relates back very directly to the revenue the council will collect, I would ask the minister whether if, for example, it were established by the Grants Commission that the amount that was collected was less than an effort neutral ...

Mr Dondas: An effort neutral, what's that?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr EDE: I am addressing my question to the honourable minister through you, Mr Chairman, because I can understand that the Minister for Lands would have no knowledge of this subject.

However, the point that I am making is that, if it were established that the flat rate that has been set for 3 years in fact constituted something less than an effort neutral revenue-raising effort, would that mean that, under the Grants Commission, the shire's untied grants would be restricted or, in fact, reduced to take account of the fact that it had not exerted an effort neutral attempt to raise revenue?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I am a firm believer in the integrity of the Grants Commission. That will certainly be a matter for its consideration.

Remainder of the bill agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, today is the first day that I can remember the transcript of the morning's question time being provided to us by Hansard on the same afternoon. It is very appropriate that this has happened because a matter I wish to address in a minute demands a reference to question time this morning. I would like to take the opportunity of congratulating the Clerk and the Hansard staff for what I hope will be a continuing innovation, fingers crossed, because it is very useful to have the record of question time and, I guess, other debates during the day also, in our hands as quickly as possible. Certainly, I think this is a progressive step. Given its small staff and limited facilities, I believe that Hansard does an excellent job. It is very pleasing that, with the restrictions that the Hansard staff operate under, they have been able to provide us with a transcript of this morning's question time so promptly. I would like to pass on my congratulations to them and I hope that it is something that they can continue. I would expect that their ability to continue to do so may be somewhat dependent on how late we sit each night. Certainly, I think that is another reason for us to consider sitting more often and rising earlier. It

would lead to better government, a better standard of discussion in this Assembly and, as demonstrated today, a better delivery from Hansard of valuable material.

This morning in question time, the Chief Minister made clear to the Assembly and the electorate that the government had no intention of revealing how much public money is being paid in relation to the dismissal of the former Under-Treasurer, Dr Richard Madden. We asked a legitimate question about how much had been expended from the taxpayer's purse on the political manoeuvre involved in getting rid of Dr Madden. We are not prepared to accept all the nonsense that the Chief Minister carried on with about the privacy of public servants. No government has the right to privacy in its financial dealings. The financial dealings of a responsible government should be - and where responsible governments are in office that is the case - a matter for the public record. The individual's right to privacy is respected except where lavish amounts of public money are concerned or where there are legitimate beliefs that lavish amounts of public money may be concerned. That is what we are talking about tonight.

The Chief Minister said the terms of Dr Madden's departure from the public service would not be disclosed. That is a direct quote from the joint press release issued yesterday by the Chief Minister and Dr Richard Madden. I think the words were chosen deliberately by the parties because it does not say 'at Dr Madden's request' or 'on the request of Dr Madden' or anything which would indicate political sensitivity by Dr Madden on that particular issue. It says quite clearly and definitely that the Chief Minister said he was not prepared to disclose the terms of Dr Madden's departure from the public service.

Mr Finch: He said they agreed.

Mr SMITH: He did not say that they agreed. I will read from the press release: 'The Chief Minister said that the terms of Dr Madden's departure from the public service would not be disclosed'. Of course, that makes a mockery of the comments of the Chief Minister this morning when he said: 'Like other individuals in this society, public servants are entitled to their privacy. The arrangements between individual public servants and their employer, in so far as their remunerations or matters directly dealing with their own personal association with government are concerned, should not necessarily be the source of public debate'. We do not have any problem with that as a general rule. However, this is a most unusual circumstance indeed.

Furthermore, we know from the wording of this joint press release that the public servant involved had no objection to the release of the information. We can reasonably suspect that, being a proper public servant, as he was in the Northern Territory and will be for some lucky state government or the federal government, he had a positive interest in having a full disclosure of his settlement made available to the public of the Northern Territory. That is because he is a proper public servant. He has a proper regard for the public purse and the taxpayer's money and, of course, there is no doubt that that is why he paid the price that he did. His proper regard for the taxpayer's purse is not a regard that is shared by this government under the present Chief Minister who is simply following the tradition this government has established over a number of years under previous Chief Ministers.

We know that Dr Madden has been sacked but we do not know why ...

Mr Finch: How do you know he has been sacked?

Mr SMITH: He has been sacked. The press release tells us that, if the member for Wagaman would like to have a look at it. We all know of the disgraceful amendment to the Public Service Act of 6 June last year through which this government gave itself unprecedented powers of transfer and dismissal, but I do not recall any section of that amending legislation that said that the Chief Minister must make the terms and conditions of out-of-hand sackings privileged information. Nor did it say that he must protect the privacy of the victims of his political whims. It did not say that the public cannot know how their tax dollars are being squandered in these secret deals.

In section 14 of the Public Service Act and the amendments thereto, it states that transactions involving public moneys are accountable within the budget appropriation. Where in the budget appropriation is this payout listed? The act says these transactions are accountable and we call on the government to disclose the cost of the transaction.

There is no doubt that the public has a right to know. It was the Chief Minister, not Dr Madden, who insisted that this must be a secret transaction. Dr Madden, a man familiar with the public service, did not want his privacy protected. He did not insist on all this gentility and honour because he is more than familiar with the need for financial accountability of public moneys.

Mr Perron: Is he the source of that information?

Mr SMITH: Of course he is not, Mr Speaker, because he was blackmailed by the government into not making any further comment. It is clear that, if he had not agreed to make no further comment, he would not have received his payout. That is a further disgraceful element in this whole affair. Of course, Dr Madden will not say anything further.

Mr Perron: You are assuming he wants it released?

Mr SMITH: One does not have to assume anything. It is clear from this press release that the Chief Minister was the person who insisted on the secrecy provisions. The Chief Minister is trying to cover up the amount paid under a web of niceties that no one except the gullible member for Fannie Bay believes. No one denies that public servants have a right to privacy, but the public has a right to know how much these fallings from grace will cost them. In times gone by, people who fell from grace were taken to Tower Hill and executed publicly. The whims of absolute power cost people dearly. In those days, at least the victims could address the crowd from the block and a solution was final and cheap. Richard Madden was denied his last words and we, the ordinary people, have to foot the bill.

Dr Madden is simply the last in a long list of players to exit stage left having fallen from favour. The cavalcade of deposed chief executives is impressive indeed. Let me name but a few in recent times: Pope, Armstrong, Cameron, Dryer and Purcell. How much has it all cost? We do not know but I would suspect there would not be much change out of \$2m from the payments to deposed public servants. \$2m has been paid out because these men would not do the bidding of those people opposite who are so concerned about privacy and human rights. That \$2m could well have been used in crucial shortfall areas in the Northern Territory such as the provision of proper facilities for our mentally-disadvantaged and physically-handicapped people who have no proper residential care facilities at present.

Where does the money come from? Who pays for it all? Where is it explained in the budget? This sort of thing is happening so often that we need a new budget heading called 'Summary Dismissals'. If we had a heading called 'Summary Dismissals', we would be able to refer to the appropriate budget item. We do not know the figures because the government is intent on hiding this sort of information somewhere or other in the budget figures. The taxpayer demands to know what happened in the Madden case and what agreements were entered into.

Mr Speaker, if you want an example of how taxpayers generally feel about these matters, I refer you to the federal government's termination of the services of Dr David Armstrong, the former head of the Bicentennial Authority. Imagine the outrage there would have been at the federal government level and amongst Australian taxpayers if the termination agreement for Dr David Armstrong had not been made available. The colleagues of the members opposite, who sit in the federal parliament, would have jumped up and down and screamed and yelled. They would have argued that it was a legitimate matter of public interest that the terms and conditions of the payments to Dr David Armstrong be made available to the public and to the parliament. They would have been right, and that is the reason why the details of the payments made to Dr David Armstrong were made available. The federal government realised that it had an obligation, as a responsible financial manager, to make known the details of those arrangements - difficult and unpleasant as that might have been at the time. Certainly, it resulted in the federal government copping a lot of flak. \$500 000 is a big payout for anybody and the federal government realised that it was under an obligation to ensure that the information was made available.

Mr Speaker, compare that with the consistent attitude of this government on these matters. On the occasions - too many for comfort - that this government has terminated the services of distinguished heads of department, it has refused to give reasons for the terminations and has refused to tell the taxpayers the terms and conditions of the payouts involved even though it has spent over \$2m of public money. That is irresponsible and it is not good enough. It is time that the Northern Territory government came clean with this Assembly and with the taxpayers of the Northern Territory. We seem to have the Territory government and the squeaky-clean, new Chief Minister continuing to treat the public purse as their purse. Dr Madden wished the Territory and all its people well. We too can only wish the people well. While this government has the power to spend their money, gag the recipients and continue to refuse to disclose amounts, the Territory people need all the best wishes they can get because they are certainly not getting good and responsible government.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, in the adjournment debate last Thursday, I touched on several matters relating to redundant aircraft and suggested a new look at an air force reserve training scheme. I was unable to finish my remarks because I ran out of time. At the end of my speech, I suggested that, under a reserve training scheme for the defence forces, consideration could be given to the possibility of using Australian-based trawlers in a surveillance capacity. This evening, I would like to address that matter specifically.

We have a considerable number of trawlers working around the Australian coastline. For the major part of the season, they work in areas where incursions have occurred and other threats may develop. At the moment, we have problems with the running of drugs into some of our more remote localities. We are aware of the enormous sums that the federal government spends on commercial surveillance contracts.

You may recall, Mr Speaker, that I touched on the matter of redundant or soon to be redundant aircraft under Australian defence force control at the moment. I suggested that if the 19 Trackers that are currently in a redundancy mode at HMAS Albatross, 30 Iroquois helicopters, several A-model Hercules and 60 to 70 Mirage aircraft that are soon to become redundant were stored in my suggested desert storage retrieval area located somewhere around Alice Springs, some of those aircraft could be utilised in a training scheme for northern surveillance. They could be used as a reserve force to ensure that we maximised our resources for the continued training of personnel leaving the defence forces. Such a scheme could work very well in conjunction with our commercial trawler fleet around Australia.

We have a vast amount of experience among the people on our trawlers. All of the masters of our trawlers have logged a considerable number of years at sea and have passed a considerable number of examinations in respect of maritime activities. Their engineers and radio operators are also highly experienced. By and large, the courses that they undertake and the experience necessary to provide them with competency certificates are comparable with the requirements for defence force personnel in respect of similar activities such as the operation of minor coastal vessels and radio operations.

It seems to me that we could utilise this virtually untapped potential. I am not referring to the northern area only, although that is extremely important because of its remoteness and the inability of commercial surveillance aircraft to regularly monitor areas that trawlers pass through. The scheme could be implemented in the south as well. Not only could the members of the commercial fleet undertake joint exercises with the reserve air force but they could undergo some training with the army reserve and become involved in operational exercises which would give them the capability, in the event of a threat, to perform second-line defence activities. For example, trawlers could be engaged on minor mine-sweeping and to conduct patrols. If carrier-based aircraft dropped mines in some of our major channels or coastal seaways, we would have a great deal of trouble coping with them.

To my knowledge, only 1 mine-sweeper is operational in the Australian Navy at the moment. That mine-sweeper would face an impossible task if it were asked to clear mines from the areas around the Bass Strait oil rigs, which would become a very important strategic defence area in the event of any threat in the southern region. In northern Australia, there are the north-west gas fields and the Jabiru oilfields off the north-west coast. These places would be strategically important in the event of threat. Certainly, they could be cut off from us by the seeding of mines. The same thing would apply to the Torres Strait channel and the east coast channels.

Mr Speaker, I would like to touch on another subject this evening, and reiterate what the member for Victoria River said last night in respect of the Territory Tidy Towns awards. Whilst I will not speak on the subject at length, I would like to record my appreciation of the efforts of the people of the Ludmilla electorate who worked so hard in the competition this year and to advise the Assembly of the people and businesses who received prizes and recognition for their contributions.

The Special Effort Award in the Best School Project category was given to Ludmilla Primary school. The winner of Best Business Project, category B, was the Darwin Turf Club and a Special Effort Award was given to the lawn-mowing services organisation run by Mr Bengert. He advised me later that 7 of the schools with which he has a contract won either special effort awards or trophies. In category B, Best Business, Department or Authority Project, the



Northern Territory Housing Commission won the trophy with Kurringal Park. In the overall category B, the electorate of Ludmilla won a third prize and a trophy.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I wish to address disparate subjects in the adjournment this afternoon. The first relates to the Annual Report of the Department of the Legislative Assembly which was tabled in the Assembly. I would like to commend the Clerk and the Hansard staff, in particular, for the provision of the Hansard of question time on the same day as it occurred. This was possible as a result of the recent introduction into the department of computerised on-screen editing and other technological advances. As the report indicates, in fact this is the first time in Australia that a parliament has used this process for the editing of its Hansard.

Having said that, I would like to commend the report to all honourable members for reading. I have no doubt that they will find it interesting and informative. I wonder how many members are aware that the entire Parliamentary Record for 1985-86 is on computer. That is a matter that interests me particularly and something that I have discussed with the Clerk on a number of occasions. I know that the Parliamentary Record for past years will be placed progressively on the computer as well as the whole Parliamentary Record from this point on. Aligned with the quite dramatic and far-reaching changes that have been made in the facilities provided for members in this Assembly, the research facilities that are so important to the proper conduct of the parliament will be enhanced considerably.

I confess that I have never been a very enthusiastic supporter for a new Parliament House. I could quite fairly be described as a positive opponent to the design that was finally selected. However, I am confident that that will not be a major problem because I have no doubt that, by the time the Parliament House is actually built, technology and design that probably has not even made Beyond 2000 yet will be involved.

One aspect of the report relates to a matter that I have raised on a number of occasions over the years and I think it deserves the special attention of members. It is on page 11 of the report:

Over the past few years, there has been a tendency for the Assembly to sit longer hours. This has imposed difficulties for the staff and especially for the staff of Hansard who attempt at all times to produce the daily Hansard for the use of members prior to the next day's sitting. Despite all efforts, the staff were not able to produce the total draft Hansard by the next day on at least 3 occasions. It should be pointed out that, if the Legislative Assembly sits until 6 pm, the Hansard staff will have completed their work by midnight. If, however, the Assembly sits until 9.30 pm, the finishing time for the Hansard staff will be approximately 4 am and, in some circumstances, after 5 am the next day.

Mr Speaker, the reason I make that point - and I have made it before - is that one can understand on occasions why long sitting days are required in parliaments that sit for 3 months - or, in the case of the federal parliament, 6 months - out of the 12. However, it would require only very moderate planning, I would imagine, to avoid such long sitting days in a parliament that sits, as indicated in the report, some 20 days out of 365. We could avoid what have been fairly described as 'marathon' sittings where we have risen at midnight after starting at 10 am. There is really little excuse for the conduct of our business in that fashion and it does place extraordinary

strain on the very efficient and effective staff that services this Assembly. It is easy - and I know that honourable members have said it - to say that they are there to serve and that they are paid overtime etc. I really do not think that is the point. It is not the most efficient and effective way in which the parliament could be used and, with so few sitting days, I do not think there is much excuse for it.

Having said that, I again commend the report to honourable members who may not have been specifically connected with the committees of the Assembly which have had access to this information. The report contains a complete brief of the very substantial changes that will occur over the next few months to the ancillary services, particularly the research and information services, that will be made available to members.

Mr Speaker, I would like to provide another bouquet in the adjournment. This morning, the Minister for Health tabled a report from the Menzies School of Health Research.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable Minister for Education tabled that report.

Mr B. COLLINS: I stand corrected, Mr Speaker. The Minister for Education did indeed and, in fact, I heard him adjuring us, to use the term much favoured by the member for MacDonnell, to read the report. I would like simply to give my support to it.

I am 1 of those members who have taken the opportunity to make a personal visit to the Menzies School of Health Research. I would like to thank publicly the people there for the time and trouble that they took to ensure that I learnt as much as I could from that visit. My particular thanks go to Professor Matthews for the assistance he gave me on that occasion. I would urge all honourable members who have not done so to have a look at the level of research that is being conducted there.

I commend the Menzies School of Health Research for the quality of this report. It is the most interesting and informative report that I have seen tabled in the Assembly. I was reading through it today and 1 of the most interesting articles is by John Matthews himself. It is on page 52 and deals with health risks attributable to ionising radiation. Particularly interesting is the section dealing with Chernobyl on page 55. It is headed: 'Lessons from Chernobyl':

The nuclear reactor accident in Chernobyl in the USSR was by far the greatest disaster in the nuclear industry with 31 deaths from acute radiation toxicity (dosages of 4000-6000 mSv are fatal). There will also be 280 delayed cancer deaths in the surrounding population and another 6000 cancer deaths in populations subjected to radioactive fallout in areas remote from Chernobyl. Residents within 10 km of Chernobyl were subjected to dose rates in excess of 10 mSv per hour prior to evacuation which is about 100 000 times greater than the normal background radiation.

The final paragraph of the article states:

The disaster at Chernobyl will cause thousands of premature deaths over the next 50 years or so; it will also have a major impact on the future of the nuclear power industry.

I find it interesting to consider what the reaction and the fallout, in a legal sense, would have been if that accident had occurred in the United States of America. Honourable members will recall just how little we learnt about Chernobyl and how difficult it was to obtain any information. I would not think, for example, that the citizens of the Soviet Union who have been badly affected in that way would have too much chance of redress or of receiving considerable amounts of compensation in Soviet courts.

Mr Perron: Even Greenpeace couldn't get anything.

Mr B. COLLINS: That is right, Mr Speaker. Once again, it reinforces my view that the people of the free world are very fortunate to live in countries that have the democratic way of life and rule of law that we have. Had this accident occurred in the United States, the United States government, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and, indeed, the companies concerned, would have been knee deep in writs.

Mr Speaker, I would like to commend the Channel 8 organisation and this commendation is very sincere indeed. I have always enjoyed the Today Show. Like most politicians, I am an absolute addict to current affairs and news; I cannot live without them, whether they are favourable or critical. It is a tremendous innovation for Darwin. Personally, I appreciate the service being provided very much indeed, and I commend Channel 8 for providing it. The Channel 8 service is improving consistently and noticeably. I look forward to - and I am assured it will happen - the introduction of the Sunday program some time in the new year. I will not swear to that, because it is a Channel 9 program. However, I understand that Channel 8 is proposing to bring it in.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Have people got the time to watch it?

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, in response to that interjection, like most members, I have not been able to sit through a program of the Today Show at all since it was introduced, but we have these amazing gadgets called video recorders. A touch on the right buttons, which requires a minimum of skill, will ensure the program is recorded and can be watched at leisure later on.

The Sunday program is one of the top current affair programs broadcast in Australia at present.

Mr Hanrahan: Wouldn't it be beaut if we could have what could be a commercial footprint right throughout the Territory?

Mr B. COLLINS: It would indeed.

I know that Channel 8 has been discussing the prospect of that program being introduced, as well as the Today program, in the new year and I look forward to seeing that made official.

Mr Dale: That's 3 accolades. What is coming?

Mr B. COLLINS: A brickbat is coming up now.

Mr Speaker, when I was perusing the NT News today I noticed that I had copped yet another serve from Francis Xavier in the editorial, only 1 of many. I must say that I consider that getting a serve from Frank Alcorta is a badge of honour which I wear with pride as I have worn it on many other occasions and I hope I will be around to cop many more in years to come. Frank Alcorta

seems to be the single common factor between the CLP and the ALP which means that he must be doing something right.

I would like to say a few words in support of what the Leader of the Opposition has said already about the settlement in respect of the former head of the Treasury, Dr Richard Madden. In the case of Dr Madden, there is a very clear matter that has to be addressed. Departmental heads may come and go, but it is a fact of public and political life that, when people in charge of the Treasury go, particularly under strange and unexplained circumstances, it creates concern that goes beyond the replacement, for example, of the Secretary of the Department of Ports and Fisheries or the Department of Transport and Works. There is considerable concern about the entirely unexplained termination of Dr Madden's appointment.

Mr Dale: What about the federal Treasury?

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, there is a classic example of support for my argument. The government members always do that. That clarifies precisely what I am saying. Of course, the interjection was about the departure of the head of the federal Treasury. Nothing could better demonstrate my point than the widespread public concern and controversy that that caused. A classic example, may I say, and I thank the Minister for Community Development for providing it.

If the departmental head of the federal Department of Primary Industry, for example, had resigned, no one would ever have heard about it. But when John Stone resigned, we heard about it as lead news for weeks after the event. There is a particular concern attached, and rightly so, to the public servants who head our Treasuries. I will say, without fear of contradiction, that there is not the slightest excuse or logic attached to the refusal by the government to disclose what was done with the public money that was spent in sacking Dr Madden. In my view, being reasonable about it and looking at what was likely to have been awarded, the amount is probably somewhere between \$0.25m and \$0.5m. It could be as high as \$0.5m when one looks at the intriguing statement made by the Chief Minister that the settlement reflected the contribution that Dr Madden had made over the last 3 years.

If the head of the Bicentennial Authority, for example, had announced that the government and himself had a legal arrangement whereby the amount of public money involved in his departure would not be disclosed, there would have been an outcry across Australia, and rightly so. An absolute bombardment would have been launched in federal parliament by the colleagues of the honourable members opposite. Governments hold public money in trust. It does not belong to them; it belongs to the people who contribute it. Governments administer it in trust. They have an absolute responsibility to disclose to the public, at any time and particularly in the parliament, how it is used. This government has an absolute obligation to do so on this occasion as well.

Mr POOLE (Araruen): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to congratulate the Alice Springs Regional Tourist Association for organising a public forum on town planning issues. It is also worthy of note that the YWCA has devoted its regular tea and topic program tonight to a discussion of town planning in Alice Springs. Of course, all this discussion and the wide diversity of views that have been expressed in letters to the editors of the NT News and the Centralian Advocate over the last couple of weeks have related to the planned extension to Lasseter's Casino.

I think it is worth while to talk about the plan to expand the role of the casino in Alice Springs. I can remember when Federal Hotels built the casino in Alice Springs some 6 years ago. I remember distinctly seeing the plans for 4 blocks which were to have made up the accommodation area of that casino. Regrettably, only a couple of blocks were built in Alice Springs, giving a total of 75 or 76 rooms. The decision to defer the building of the other 2 blocks was blamed on high interest rates at the time. I should mention that the same thing happened at Mindil Beach in Darwin.

It is quite obvious that the planned extension of Lasseter's Casino is simply to make the property itself more viable. It has been in the tourist industry for many years. It has become blatantly obvious that the core structure of the casino in Alice Springs is far too big for the amount of accommodation it can offer. The cabaret room, the restaurants and bars etc just do not have enough people going through them to create the viability that a structure of that magnitude needs today. It is a problem that exists in respect of a number of other properties in the town. The core structures of those properties in Alice Springs are rather large for the number of rooms that they offer.

Turning to another subject, while I was waiting at the Alice Springs Airport for my flight to Darwin on Monday morning, I looked around to try to find a seat in the airport. Only 1 aircraft was on the ground at the time, but every seat, bar about 3, was filled. There was only 1 other flight due in or out after my flight. On discussing this with the Airport Manager of Australian Airlines in Alice Springs, he told me that it planned to increase its aircraft schedule every Sunday up to 8 jet movements. When we multiply that by presumably a similar number of aircraft operated by Ansett, it really highlights the totally inadequate facilities that that terminal offers. Something has to be done about that; some money has to be found from somewhere, and I think it is time for us to resurrect the fight with the federal government to increase the facilities at Alice Springs Airport.

The airlines are still showing growth even though it is not as strong as that achieved on the run in and out of the Northern Territory last year - some 20% or more. I am reliably informed that their growth is still considerable and, obviously, with the amount of work that the Tourist Commission is doing, our visitor numbers will continue to grow over the next few years and the problem will get worse and worse.

That brings me to some comments I would like to make about the 2-airline policy. It is apparent that this policy is gradually disintegrating in Australia with the advent of the latest East West flight into Cairns and the victory that that airline had in the courts a few months ago. It is pleasing to note as a traveller that the departure times are starting to vary both north and south from Alice Springs between the 2 airlines. It is interesting to observe that many flights appear to be arriving late, particularly into Darwin. Consequently, some of the departures from Darwin seem to run late regularly. Of course, this is a very common thing in the United States which has been held up as the example of aviation deregulation. I note that James Strong, the general manager of Australian Airlines, has said that the real issue of the debate concerning aviation policy should be about the kind of airline system the travelling public needs in Australia.

Looking at recent trends in the United States, I see some pretty negative things emerging. The hopes and the fears of the late 1970s and the early 1980s are starting to be realised. Certainly, air fares have dropped. More airlines have started up, but many have fallen by the wayside. Airlines

generally are now fewer because of takeovers, but they are more powerful. Big cities have more frequent services with more delays in passenger handling and aircraft movements caused by congestion. Smaller towns have lost services and have been serviced by smaller aircraft. The United States Justice Department has expressed concern that strong competition is coming to an end because the industry will be controlled by 2, 3 or possibly 5 large airlines fed by smaller local airlines.

One of the effects on the price of air fares is the cost of acquisitions made by those large airlines. They are driving up the prices day by day. Business Week has raised the question of airline safety in the US. Heated competition sparked by deregulation has meant a drop off in critical aircraft maintenance - obviously something we do not want to happen in Australia. It is common knowledge that ex-Ansett and Australian Airlines planes, when they arrive on the second-hand plane market, draw the highest prices in the world because of the fine aircraft maintenance standards that both those companies have achieved.

Considering the trends that are occurring in the United States, it is obvious that we will have to watch what will occur here in the coming years. When considering changes to the 2-airline policy, the Northern Territory must ensure that our services and our rights are not compromised in favour of the large eastern state capital cities.

Last but not least, I feel that some comment must be made on behalf of the citizens of Alice Springs with regard to punishment being meted out by the courts. I note with interest some personal views from the local community on some of the sentences that have been handed down of late. How frustrated our police must be to see some of these sentences. A recent example was that of a young man who assisted friends to steal \$2000 from his employers. Later, he stole a drum of petrol, assisted in breaking and entering, and stole a car radio cassette player, a couple of speakers and a graphic equaliser from a vehicle. The following night, he and his friends stole a similar range of items from another car repair yard. Later that same night, they siphoned petrol from a car, found the keys in the glove box, and took the vehicle for a joy ride. The car was stripped at the clay pans and then set on fire. The following night, a mini moke was stolen by the same group. It was taken out to the clay pans and driven until the engine seized. The offenders then walked up to Temple Bar, stole a car from the caravan park there and drove it around in the bush, eventually driving it head-on into a tree. The radio cassette and speakers were stripped and that car was set on fire also.

For stealing, the offender received a 9-month, suspended sentence and a 3-year good behaviour bond. For 6 offences relating to car and equipment thefts, the offender was given a 15-month, suspended sentence. He was placed under the supervision of probation officers for 12 months and directed to pay \$4300 as restitution for the destruction of the Ford sedan. The judge concerned was reported in the newspaper as saying that he was certain the accused would not offend again because he had matured in the 12 months since the offences occurred, and now had a steady relationship with his girlfriend.

I do not think that type of logic should apply in the courts in the Northern Territory. I am sure a great percentage of the hard-working police officers must feel that they waste their time in carrying out their arduous duties in bringing offenders like that to justice and prosecuting them in the courts only to see offenders treated so lightly.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, it is not often that I agree with the member for Arafura, but I am going to do so this afternoon in joining him in complimenting the compilers of the Menzies School of Health Research Report. I have not read it in detail but I found it most interesting because, whilst it notes scientific experiments and research, it presents them in a way that is interesting to a person who has no scientific training. After having read this, the minister for Primary Production might like to draw it to the attention of certain people in the Department of Primary Production. They could use its format which I am sure they would find very interesting.

I asked the Minister for Primary Production a question last Thursday, but was unable to stay for the adjournment debate because I had other commitments, and so I have not yet commented on his reply. I asked him what action he intended to take in respect of officers in his department who had jobs outside their working hours in the same field of work as their employment in the department. I raised the suggestion that this could lead to a possible conflict of interest. I had several reasons for asking the question, the main one being that, whilst I do not want to stifle the initiative of those engaging in private employment and private horticultural research, several of my constituents have raised objections. Certainly, I will not mention the names of people who were mentioned as perhaps having a conflict of interest. These people are members of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science, as I am also, and it could be said that we are all I big happy family.

Years ago, public servants used to engage quite happily, outside working hours, in work which was of the same nature as their public service duties. Because of the nature of Darwin then, with its paucity of professional services and lack of private competition, nobody objected. However, more and more people are setting up in private industry and I believe that they also have to be encouraged. I know of the letters written by the Northern Territory Horticultural Association to the effect that it does not have any problems with these public servants working in their own time in the same field as they are employed in and I quite understand that point of view. I know the people in the association and I know the reasons why this view has been put forward.

I also am aware that the minister said in his reply that he would be keeping an eye on the matter in the future, and I believe this is necessary. However, he did not mention a condition which I believe the association's letter mentioned; that is, that there is no objection provided that public servants engaged in the horticultural industry outside working hours sell their produce only to the wholesale industry and not to retailers. I believe that would reasonably satisfy the people who complained to me. It would give the public servants a chance to work at their paying hobby in the private sector whilst continuing to be employed by the department. Alternatively, they may go wholly into private industry, and good luck to them whichever way they want to go. I also believe that the situation has to be monitored so that not only is justice done to everybody but justice is seen to be done.

Whilst I am on this subject, I would like to raise another matter. It relates to a constituent of mine who used to work with the Department of Primary Production. He is something of an expert on artificial insemination. He is acknowledged as an expert in this field both by private veterinary practitioners and Department of Primary Production officers, including veterinary practitioners. The Department of Primary Production has conducted seminars on artificial insemination procedures for the cattle industry and nobody has any objection to this. In fact, I applaud this initiative, as does this constituent of mine. However, I believe justice must be done to this

man. He has set up in private business and he should not be subjected to unfair competition.

After attending these seminars, people go back to their stations and use the practices they have learned. The objection relates to continuous follow-up visits to properties by the veterinary practitioners of the Department of Primary Production. These follow-up procedures could be performed adequately by this private practitioner. He sees considerable unfair competition in the present arrangement, and I agree with him. I have drawn it to the minister's attention and I hope that this is another matter that will be attended to by the relevant people in DPP. Whilst I do not want to cramp their style, I believe that the chap who has gone out on his own and set up a private business must not be disadvantaged by unfair competition from the Northern Territory government.

We are going through changing times. I have no objection at all to public servants working outside their business hours at interests which do not compete with their jobs. I have no objection at all if somebody wants to work. Far be it from me to stop them working if they want to earn an honest dollar. Lord only knows, it is hard enough to make an honest dollar these days! I believe it is irrelevant to say that objections have come only from those people who do not have the best nurseries. That is irrelevant. As I said earlier, justice must not only be done, but it must be seen to be done, for all groups of people involved.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there are a couple of matters that I wish to raise in this evening's adjournment debate, and both of them concern the Minister for Health and Housing. The first relates to the minister's responsibility for the Housing Commission and the operation of its executive housing scheme. This has been the subject of some public interest and of public statements by myself and the minister. I want to raise the particular case that I drew to the attention of the minister, and which he seems to feel has been dealt with adequately. I do not believe that it has been dealt with adequately.

In my correspondence with the minister, I referred to the principles involved in the operation of the executive housing scheme. Quite obviously, both in the public and the private sector in the Northern Territory, there are requirements for the provision of housing for employees. The peculiar shape of the housing market in northern Australia requires the provision of housing in order to attract people who have particular expertise. The Northern Territory, of course, is no exception. I believe that the executive housing scheme has to operate to attract, for want of a better term, managerial expertise which would not be available otherwise in the Northern Territory. That is 1 principle involved in the operation of such a scheme.

The second principle is that the executive housing scheme should operate to provide housing for people such as executive-level members of the public service who move from 1 centre to another. There are other areas of the public service where people are required to move from centre to centre and there is a responsibility on government, both Territory and federal, to provide housing for them. The subject of interest to us today concerns the people who are provided with housing within the ambit of the Northern Territory government's executive housing scheme.

In raising the matter publicly, my contention is that the executive housing scheme has been abused. The particular case that I drew to the minister's attention has by no means been resolved. I said that when I made



my public statements and I continue to say it, because the case that I drew to the minister's attention and which has been the subject of correspondence between us, still requires further consideration on his part. It is for that reason that I raise it in the adjournment today. The minister responded to my most recent correspondence on this issue on 23 October. I believe certain aspects of that letter require further consideration by him, and they are eminently deserving of public debate in the Legislative Assembly.

To advise members on the situation in this regard, my contention then, as now, was that the officer concerned had a de facto relationship of many years standing. The de facto spouse of that officer owns property in the Northern Territory. In addition, the officer holds equity in property in the northern suburbs of Darwin.

Mr Manzie: You're a muckraker, Neil.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, my view, and I believe it to be a reasonable one, is that there is no reason why the executive housing scheme should operate to provide concessional housing when officers availing themselves of that scheme do not ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Attorney-General to withdraw that interjection, which I regard as unparliamentary.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, certainly I withdraw unreservedly anything that I may have said that may have been unparliamentary.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, because of the property owned and the strength of the relationship involved, I do not believe that the executive level public servant concerned in this matter should have fitted within the guidelines. I cannot accept that it is necessary to provide executive housing under the executive housing scheme where such people own property.

In this particular case, there was reference to a termination of the de facto relationship. In his letter to me of 23 October, the minister stated that the director's marital status was that of supporting parent when a tenancy commenced on the particular house under the scheme. If I were to view statutory declarations by both of the people involved in what had been a long-standing de facto relationship, I might be a little more impressed. My information is that this de facto relationship has not ceased. If the honourable minister is able to provide me with those statutory declarations from the 2 people concerned, I would be more convinced.

The honourable minister has accused me of muckraking, Mr Speaker.

Mr Harris: What's this?

Mr Manzie: I withdrew that comment.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable member for MacDonnell, at my request the Attorney-General withdrew that remark.

Mr BELL: I apologise sincerely to the Minister for Housing. I assumed that there had been a second interjection which had not come to my hearing.

As I said, I found it fairly difficult to believe that, if the officer concerned owned property in Darwin, the couple were not able to avail themselves of traditional sources of housing finance in the private sector.

That is my first point. My second point is that, basically, I do not accept the bald assertion that the de facto relationship has ceased. I would appreciate some further evidence in that respect.

Mr Speaker, the second issue that I want to raise with the Minister for Health and Housing was the subject of some debate during the passage of the Appropriation Bill although I rather fear that it got lost. This is an issue of immediate concern in my electorate. I refer once again to the provision of adequate health services at Jay Creek and Areyonga within my electorate, and at Amoonguna, which is no longer in my electorate. Although I raised the matter in debate on the Appropriation Bill, a perusal of Hansard indicates that the minister did not respond to that particular point. I would appreciate some indication from him of his preparedness to retain the sort of health services that have operated in those communities. I suggested during that debate, and I reinforce the point now, that the service that has operated has not been in any way an extension of the professional expertise of Aboriginal health workers, but rather a cutback. I would like to read into Hansard an open letter from Iwupataka community at Jay Creek:

The council and people of Jay Creek community are greatly troubled to hear that the Northern Territory rural health are planning to stop Sister Rae Young attending the clinic. We have a large percentage of old age pensioners and invalids and very young people, several under 1 year old. These people need constant attention and, over the years, they have formed a great affection and faith in the sister. There are only 2 private cars on the community, and often the St John Ambulance is reluctant to come out to Jay Creek. This is another source of worry. We ask you to reconsider your decision.

The Areyonga community has been the subject of correspondence between the minister and myself already. I refer the minister to a letter from the president at Areyonga, William Donald, who has sent me a copy of a letter that he had sent to the Minister for Health dated 21 August:

We have in hand a copy of your letter to Mr Neil Bell dated 12-8-86 regarding the sister's position at Areyonga. There are a few points that you have incorrect.

1. When Sister Werchon left Areyonga in January 1985, we were told there would be no replacement as the Health Department wanted the Aboriginal health workers to try and run the clinic.
2. During the past 6 months, there have been more than 2 patients flown out with the Flying Doctor. The 1 European man who was evacuated was a tourist who came through with Noel Fullerton and had a broken leg. The health worker, Mr Donald, did see him and took him out to the plane. These 2 evacuations were by air. There have been more by air and also by road. When we have emergencies during the night, the plane cannot land and the health workers cannot get through on the radio or radio-telephone. Patients have to be driven to Hermannsburg, then, if it is needed, on to Alice Springs.
3. Our population in Areyonga is now 150, with 2 outstations having approximately 30 people living on them. Also, there are outstations further out who come into Areyonga. When there was a sister here she visited these.

At a community meeting today, we talked about this situation. We have felt for a long time that we need a sister here full time. There are times when we cannot get out of Areyonga when the airstrip is out. Then it is essential to have a sister here. It also takes an hour for any help to get to Areyonga in which time a seriously ill or hurt person could die. Please consider this as our request for a full-time nursing sister to be appointed to Areyonga.

That is a copy of a letter that has been sent to the Minister for Health. I would appreciate hearing some positive response in that regard. Quite clearly, the case has been established that, instead of the Northern Territory government increasing the professional responsibility of Aboriginal health workers, it has left a vacuum, basically because there have been ill-considered cutbacks. As far as I am concerned, ill-considered cutbacks in relation to medical services are not acceptable, and I would appreciate some undertakings from the minister in respect of the 3 communities to which I have referred.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, there are several issues which I would like to raise relating to my electorate. First, I would like to speak about Mr Stephen Davis who was appointed recently as the Northern Territory government's special adviser on Aboriginal anthropological evidence. I met Mr Davis about 5 years ago when he first went out to Milingimbi as a worker, I think with the Uniting Church. Over a period of time, he managed to gather considerable information in respect of the culture and traditions of the people at Milingimbi.

Mr Speaker, you would be aware that Mr Davis has been in the news lately in connection with massive sales that he made on his own behalf to the mining company, Esso, which was to donate bark paintings and artifacts to the Northern Territory Museum. I believe that the way that he obtained those artifacts was wrong. In fact, I have spoken to people at Milingimbi who have advised me that they are very concerned. They would like some of those artifacts back.

It was a collection that a former teacher had made over a period of 5 years. The people of Milingimbi had trusted this teacher to collect it on the basis that it would be put in a museum for them. The community was in the process of setting up a museum when the teacher concerned left after his period as the principal at the school. After that, Mr Davis went out there to work for a while. He did some work for the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority and for the Northern Land Council and he got to know some of the locals pretty well. Somehow or other, he managed to get his hands on these artifacts and bark paintings that the people had been storing for some time for their museum. The story is that he offered some money to people at Milingimbi to purchase the artifacts that were stored at the school for safekeeping by the former principal. The collection has left Milingimbi and is now in the hands of an agent in Darwin ready to be given to the Northern Territory Museum.

My concern is that some really sacred ceremonial artifacts and paintings are included in that collection. I have some personal connections with the people at Milingimbi because of our cultural interchanges and dreamings in an area that includes Milingimbi, Ramangining, Elcho Island and Lake Evella. In fact, most of the paintings came from a tribe who originally called themselves the landowners of Milingimbi. The 60 Minutes program went there to interview the people concerned and they stressed that it was very important to them to have those paintings returned. The traditional landowner there and many other people have expressed to me their grave concern that, if the material got into

the wrong hands, there would be people who might be emotionally or spiritually affected. I would urge the government to examine the matter to see if it could give some support for the return of the paintings to the people concerned.

On another matter, I would like to express my concern, as I did in the appropriation debate, at the level of funding which outlying communities receive from the Departments of Community Development and Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs to supply facilities such as sports halls to keep the people busy and away from activities like petrol sniffing and vandalism. The Minister for Community Development would be familiar with a community on Groote Eylandt where, on a recent visit, I saw kids as young as 3 and 4 years sniffing petrol and the community was not showing any concern whatsoever.

The problem of petrol sniffing has raised its ugly head in the media over the last couple of weeks. I urge the government to ensure that it does its utmost to help solve this problem because we are talking about the young people who will replace the older people in Aboriginal communities in the years to come. Certainly, I would not want to see the loss of a community like Angurugu or Umbakumba because those children have started to take up petrol sniffing. If there were legislation which imposed penalties on people for petrol sniffing, the government would do the people in those communities a great service. Milngimbi is not so bad, but Angurugu, Elcho Island and Umbakumba are places that I am very concerned about.

The other issue that I want to raise with the Minister for Community Development relates to the use of outstations as places where petrol sniffers can be sent. I would not like to see outstations used for this purpose. I would be totally against it because many of the old people want to develop those outstations for themselves and their families. If it is the intention of the Northern Territory government to place sniffers in those communities, it should be very careful how it goes about it.

Bickerton Island is 1 of the best government-funded communities that I have visited and it would be totally unfair to ask people like Jo Wulitnabah, who runs that community and has just established it, to look after a group of petrol sniffers there. I recall the time when Bremer Island was used as an isolated community where petrol sniffers were sent. People were sent from places like Yuendumu and Hermannsburg. Those people had never been up north in their lives. To take people away from the environment that they are accustomed to would be unfair. I urge the government not to use outstations as places to send people from established communities like Yuendumu in an attempt to overcome their petrol sniffing problem. I am sure that people in my area would appreciate it if something was done, and I believe that the minister is aware of it.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will try to clarify a couple of points made by the member for Arnhem. It seems I am not yet getting the message across. My staff have been telling me that I am starting to repeat a number of things in the Assembly in relation to community government. Here I go again.

The member for Arnhem talked about the intention of the Northern Territory government to send petrol sniffers out to homelands or outstations. He spoke about a community not showing any concern whatsoever. Like the rest of the opposition, the honourable member is simply out of touch with the requirements of his constituents. I am talking about an Aboriginal and his Aboriginal

constituents. It is quite a remarkable statement, but it is a fact. I have been to some 26 communities in the Northern Territory over the past few months. As I said yesterday, I have probably been to more communities in that time than all of the members of the opposition combined.

Mr Ede: Rubbish!

Mr DALE: The idea of sending petrol sniffers to Bickerton Island was put to me by the community because it was concerned about the problem. Clearly, patronising attitudes will not get the Aboriginal communities anywhere. They are keen to do something. The honourable member said that he saw a lot of petrol sniffing at Angurugu. It is horrific. You have only to drive out of the main area of the community to see the kids lined up along the river banks sniffing petrol. The council in that area has been searching for a way to combat the problem, particularly when other members of the community are, for the want of a better term, sly grogging to kids ready-made cans with a little tie around them and with an inch and a half of petrol in the bottom for \$1 if you are quick.

Some of the families are saying that they do not want to join with the council in taking some rather strong action against these kids. They believe the only solution is to remove them from the source of petrol sniffing, particularly when people are trying to entice them into just that practice. They believe the answer is to send them out to Bickerton Island with a tribal elder and return them to some of their traditional ways until they get petrol sniffing out of their system. Whilst that is a very small move, it is a significant one. Let me assure the honourable member that the Northern Territory government is not trying to force the community into this. It is its own decision. The people are frantic.

I think he said that he saw some petrol sniffing at Umbakumba. I do not think he did because the community fixed the problem there by flogging the kids to within an inch of their lives.

Mr Ede: Do you approve of that?

Mr DALE: They told me.

Mr Ede: Do you approve of it?

Mr DALE: I believe what they told me.

Mr Ede: Do you approve of it?

Mr DALE: Do I approve of it? If it stops petrol sniffing, yes.

Mr Ede: Thank you. I just want that on the record.

Mr DALE: I have already put it on the record. You have not been listening. As I said the other day, a broken arm ...

Mr Ede: 'Within an inch of their lives', you said.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr DALE: A broken arm will heal but brain damage from sniffing petrol will not. If you give me the choice for any kid in the Northern Territory, I will break his arm any time.

Mr Ede: You are pretty good at that, are you?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr DALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will accept that interjection because, once again, it illustrates how pathetic the honourable member for Stuart really is.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me touch on the other subject raised by the member from Arnhem. I share his concern about what we call the Milingimbi collection. Unfortunately, I was in my office and missed some of what he had to say on my way over here. There is a collection of barks or artifacts that have been referred to as the Milingimbi collection. It is true that people from the Willesee program came to the Northern Territory and tried to badger several people into making statements in relation to that collection. I am told that they informed the people at Milingimbi that they were filming on behalf of the Northern Territory Museum. Obviously, they were not but they have been trying frantically to blow this situation out of all proportion. As far as I know, no deal has been done with a company called Esso. Certainly, it has some interest in the collection but no deal has been done. The entire collection is held in the vaults of the Northern Territory Museum alongside the Strehlow collection.

I have been working on this for some 5 or 6 weeks and I instructed the Department of Law to establish the ownership of the Milingimbi collection. Until such time as that is established, absolutely no action will be taken in relation to that collection. It is my intention, as the minister responsible, to secure that collection for the people of the Northern Territory and in the best interests of the people of Milingimbi.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, once again the Minister for Community Development has demonstrated the naive, simplistic attitude which has been the bane of Aboriginal communities' existence for goodness knows how long.

Mr Dale: Like telling them there is water where there isn't?

Mr EDE: I refer to his naive statement that he has visited all those communities in the last couple of months and therefore he is somehow the full bottle on all their desires and needs and that puts him in a far better position to make these judgments from on high than the member for Arnhem has been able to over 30-odd years of what could only be described as a fairly close coexistence with the people of his electorate. That is absolutely naive. On that basis, he has come up with the simplistic solution that he will break people's arms if that is what is necessary to stop them from petrol sniffing. That is the stuff of a crazy lunatic.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member will withdraw that remark unreservedly.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw that remark unreservedly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if I stated that the honourable minister was carrying on like a lunatic, that would be unparliamentary and, of course, you would rightly pull me up. There are many people in the Northern Territory who believe that the honourable minister is a lunatic, but it would be wrong of me to refer to him in this place in those terms.

However, I will turn back to my original statement that his simplistic solutions for complex issues bode no good at all for the administration of his portfolio.

Mr Dale: Mention 1 solution and I will ...

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker ...

Mr Dale: Go on, 1. Just 1.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will be heard in silence.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the minister has been making statements of that ilk both inside and outside this Assembly for some time now. I welcome the time when I will have a full 20 minutes to hoist him with his own petard over those issues. I am not going to attempt it now with only 10 minutes of speaking time remaining to me. I will finish with the minister by saying simply that maybe, when he learns a little bit more about the complexities of some of the issues that he talks about so glibly here, he may find that some of the solutions may not be quite so simple as they seem.

Mr Dale: Like the Mexican dam? That was one of your solutions.

Mr EDE: The other matter that I wish to raise tonight stems from answers which members of the government have given to some questions. I refer firstly to the answer to written question No 36 in which I asked the Chief Minister to advise me of details of compensation paid by the Northern Territory government to Mr John Armstrong. I asked him what the circumstances of the payment were and how much was involved.

The answer that I received was that the terms and conditions of the settlement for Mr John Armstrong were negotiated by the Crown Solicitor on behalf of the Northern Territory Electricity Commission, and that there was a clear understanding with Mr Armstrong that the amount and terms of the settlement were to remain strictly confidential. That was the first inkling we had that this particular Chief Minister intends to put a veil of secrecy over the distribution of funds to people whom his government sacks from the public service. I am advised that the case in question was the subject of a court action in Victoria, and apparently the Northern Territory government did not oppose the terms of settlement. No doubt, we will be able to find out a bit more about that. However, I am reliably advised that there was a substantial payout in that case.

That leads us to the case of Dr Madden whose employment was terminated by this government. I am advised that he was provided with a substantial payout by the Northern Territory government so that it could induce him to leave without the embarrassment of court proceedings during which it would have been established that it had no grounds upon which to remove him. Either that was the case or it was done in an attempt to hide the particular grounds it had for removing him. I know of no grounds and, certainly, Dr Madden ranks very highly in my estimation for the excellent job that he did in respect of the situation in Treasury, which was deserving of condemnation by this Assembly. He was turning that department into something of which Territorians could be proud. Apparently, and we have not been able to obtain any word to the contrary, he did not tread the party line readily enough to satisfy the Chief Minister.

We foresaw this situation arising when his predecessor as Chief Minister, the member for Barkly, introduced legislation to change the Public Service Act in order to give the government certain powers. I do not know whether these powers were what the Chief Minister was relying on. At the time, I thought

that it was to the credit of members opposite that none of them spoke in the debate to support the then Chief Minister. I also thought it was to their eternal disgrace that none of them was willing to cross the floor to oppose him on it. As I said at the time, they reminded me of a mob of donkeys led by a rabbit. My opinion of them has not changed.

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The member for Stuart has used most unparliamentary terms in relation to honourable members.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr EDE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

It is an unfortunate fact of life that, if a law comes into force through this Assembly, the temptation to use its powers becomes overpowering for Chief Ministers and other ministers. We thought that, with the due effluxion of time, this Chief Minister would quietly remove some of the more bizarre provisions in that legislation. I want him to advise us whether he relied on that legislation to exert pressure on Dr Madden in order to force him out of the public service. I hope that the Chief Minister will inform us about that.

I also wish to know which parliamentary appropriation the money came from to pay the former Under Treasurer. I know myself, as I have often enough said to the Minister for Community Development and other ministers present, that in my electorate we have many a project which may entail the difference between life and death or between blindness and sight, but which cannot be accomplished because of the lack of what I see as quite substantial amounts of money. I refer to amounts in the vicinity of \$80 000 to \$100 000.

However, the advice that I get is that this government is able to find amounts of \$100 000 or \$200 000 to silence its problem children in the public service if they become too embarrassing. The effect is not only to buy them off or get rid of them, but to place pressure on other senior public servants so that they know what will happen if they step out of line and refuse to kowtow to a minister. That sort of pressure would make them reluctant even to say: 'Mr Minister, I will do exactly what you advise. However, I wish to point out to you the various ramifications of your decision'. It is quite obvious that this government does not want senior public servants who will provide it with the advice which it most certainly needs. It does not want that advice. It wants a pack of lapdogs who will lie down and allow it to ride roughshod over the taxpayers of the Northern Territory and enter into deals which would make a carpetbagger blush or do credit to the activities of a banana republic in the depths of South America.

I believe that it is time that the Chief Minister lifted the veil of secrecy that shrouds these terminations. I hope he will do it here tonight and start to give us some answers. It is not good enough for this Assembly simply to sit back and allow this government to get away with things which there is no way in the world that its cronies down in Canberra would allow people from our side of the political fence to get away with, and rightly so. The federal opposition would not allow that to happen in Canberra. I believe there is a very sound principle involved in that. This government has to show that it will give some credence to the concept of responsible government, and start to provide some of these details to this Assembly.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, having just heard that tirade of nonsense, I would say that the only honourable member opposite, the member for Stuart, and I congratulate him for breaking habit and staying in the Assembly during the adjournment ...



Mr Ede: I always do.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, it is a shame his colleagues do not do the same. We know they do not like sitting in the Assembly. They like to complain about the lack of days on which they can tie us up sitting in the Assembly while they wander around town having lunches, barbecues and God knows what else, while we get on with the business of running the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I can suggest a far better vocation for the honourable member for Stuart, and I think he should immediately take ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation. The Chief Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I believe he should resign from this Assembly and take up his true vocation as a writer of fiction. We have heard here tonight the most remarkable fiction imaginable. The honourable member started by drawing together a few assumptions, turned those assumptions into facts and then proceeded to castigate the government on the basis of the facts that he has developed from his own fertile imagination.

Mr Ede: Give us some facts.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I have said in this Assembly, and I will repeat it, that it is none of the business of the honourable member opposite what he might ...

Mr Ede: Hundreds of thousands of dollars! None of our business?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, there he goes making an assumption again.

Mr Ede: What do you tell us?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the honourable member does not know what he is talking about. I would like the member for Stuart to know that the private arrangements made with an employee of the government are none of his business. This Assembly has appointed an Auditor-General who checks the accounts and the propriety of payments. If there has been any impropriety in payments, the Auditor-General knows a heck of lot more about the appropriate expenditure of government than does any member of the opposition. This Assembly appointed the Auditor-General to carry out that function and ...

Mr Ede: You don't understand his function.

Mr HATTON: Honourable members of the opposition should show rather more respect for the role of the Auditor-General and allow him to get ...

Mr Ede: It is not his function.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will cease interjecting.

Mr HATTON: ... on with his job of checking whether we are being proper in our expenditure or otherwise.

I do not intend to reveal private details. I respect the privacy of public servants and I respect contractual arrangements that have been entered into between government and parties. I am not going to reveal information for

the ghoulish delight and satisfaction of the inquisitive socialists sitting opposite us who are caught up in a tall-poppy syndrome and a Big Brother attitude to life which leads them to believe that they have to stick their noses into every individual's private affairs. I will not feed their egos on that matter, and that is the end of it.

In respect to the role of government, I will offer a quotation: 'I have never been a believer in the system that operates in the United Kingdom, for example, where the permanent heads are, in fact, permanent heads and it is quite a considerable job to shift them'. I believe that and I am sure the honourable member opposite believes that. I am sure he believes in the right of a minister, in particular of the Chief Minister, to appoint departmental heads, to determine the location of departmental heads and to move them as and when it is seen to be appropriate for the administration of government. If he has any objection to the words that I quoted, let me give him the name of their author. They were spoken by Mr Bob Collins MLA and were recorded in Hansard of 29 February 1984. The erstwhile leader of the member opposite, before he was knifed in the back, spoke those words.

Mr Speaker, I have a string of quotations from occasions when members of the opposition have consistently supported the right of the Chief Minister of the government, and the ministers, to appoint and relocate departmental heads. Surely the opposition has not changed its stance on that and, if it has not, the only thing it is trying to do is talk me into breaking a contractual arrangement. I will not do that in this case any more than I will in respect of Mr John Armstrong. As far as I am concerned, that is the end of the matter.

Mr Speaker, I want to turn to a far more enlightening subject, a happy topic ...

Mr Ede: A more boring one.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Stuart can pack up now and leave. Obviously, he has a drink to have down at the local pub and I am happy for him to go ...

Mr Ede: Mr Speaker!

Mr HATTON: ... and join his colleagues in the bar or wherever they happen to be. They are never in the Assembly at night. Hello, I is coming back. He is not going to join us in the Chamber. That is a shame.

Mr Speaker, I would like to have a talk about some developments that are occurring in my electorate of Nightcliff and, in particular, of a project of which I am very proud. It does not involve only myself; the honourable member for Casuarina has also been a strong proponent of this particular project. This week, we had the pleasure of attending the opening of the new cycle bridge from Rapid Creek to Casuarina Beach.

Mr Speaker, I see the honourable member for Stuart is not interested in what occurs in the Top End; he is about to pack and go.

Mr Ede: If you would sit down, I would go.

Mr HATTON: That bridge is already proving to be one of the most advantageous innovations that we have provided in that particular area of Darwin. It is probably the most used cycle bridge in the Darwin area and is

proving a great boon for kids, for example, in the Nakara area cycling to Nightcliff High School. Quite a number of young people were present at the opening. I spoke with them, as did the Minister for Transport and Works, and they told us how much time it has saved them, and of the convenience it provides for people in Nightcliff and Rapid Creek by giving access to DIT, Casuarina Beach, and the hospital. It is used also by people from the suburbs further north to come into Nightcliff and Rapid Creek. The minister stated that it is the longest single span bridge in the Northern Territory.

Mr Ede: It is only 40 m.

Mr HATTON: Yes, 40 m in a single span. It is not big by Australian standards, but it is a matter of some moment for the Northern Territory. We are particularly pleased to see that span linking the electorate of Casuarina and what will be the new electorate of Nightcliff once the redistribution procedures are implemented.

I might advise that the cycle path, which was the subject of some debate in the Assembly, has also been completed on the Casuarina Beach side. It just goes to show that, whilst we are engaged in considerable battles to defend the Northern Territory's position against thieves in the night who come to hand over titles to land, countering presumptive action by the federal government in trying to circumvent procedures in respect of Kakadu stage 2 and trying to get railways and decent airports built, this government is also looking at the nuts and bolts issues that are helping kids and people in their normal daily lives.

I have not taken the opportunity for some time to talk about developments in my electorate. I am particularly pleased with the development of the stinger net at Nightcliff Beach. Along with the other developments there, it is proving a great boon to the community in that area. Nightcliff Beach is becoming quite a recreation centre. As a result of the net, there can be swimming in the sea for 12 months of the year. A number of adults and kids are enjoying the water all year round and, with the opportunities for water skiing and other aquatic sports off the beach area, it is an attractive and popular recreational area in a very nice sheltered waterway. It complements the upgraded ring road around Casuarina Drive and the improvements that are proceeding there.

The only remaining issues that we really must address in Nightcliff are the problem of traffic congestion at the Dick Ward Drive and Progress Drive intersection, and the completion of the planning study for the Nightcliff area. As I outlined in my maiden speech, 1 of the problems in my electorate is that 45% of the residential units are attached dwellings. That compares to an average of 19% for the Darwin area generally. The residents and I are particularly concerned with the number of potential areas for further development of attached dwellings in R2 and R3 zones, the concentration that that would create and the change it could impose on the nature and the lifestyle of that suburb. It could be quite detrimental. It is a beautiful residential area with many old Darwin families who basically want to retain it as a good domestic environment. I am very keen to ensure that there is not an excessive amount of flat and other development which will destroy the suburb's intrinsic character.

I am pleased to say that the recommendations of the planning study go a considerable way towards protecting against further development of excessive numbers of flats, particularly in R3 areas in my electorate. As a result of lengthy consultations throughout the electorate, I can say that that has the

strong support of the community. The electorate also strongly supports the need to sort out the traffic problems in the Dick Ward Drive and Progress Drive area and, if possible, to reroute some of the traffic coming off Dick Ward Drive to connect more directly with Banksia Street and Casuarina Drive and away from Progress Drive which, of course, passes in front of the Nightcliff Shopping Centre where there is a multitude of traffic conflict points causing quite serious congestion and traffic hazards.

I have no doubt that those matters will be addressed promptly and resolved and that Nightcliff will continue to develop. With the tree planting and other projects that are occurring, it will recover its traditional nature as a prime and very attractive domestic suburb in which people have chosen to live for very long periods of time. With the continuation of the effective representation that it has now, I am certain we will obtain those improvements and protect the lifestyle of the Nightcliff residents.

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell raised a couple of matters this evening which I believe should be addressed. One related to executive housing and the other to health services in Aboriginal communities. I would like to address those 2 matters.

Before doing that, I would like to comment in relation to the University College because I believe that the opposition has no understanding of the reason why the Northern Territory government has not supported the move to establish a university college at the Darwin Institute of Technology. To people who read the debates and listen to the comments made by the opposition, it is very clear that it has no understanding of why the Northern Territory government has not supported that suggestion.

The Minister for Education has stressed the problems of lack of space and the numbers of students that would be allowed to attend at a university college at the Darwin Institute of Technology. The main reason that the government has not supported that move relates to credibility. I have mentioned this on another occasion, but it needs to be mentioned again. It is disappointing to see that the opposition are not here to listen to what I am about to say in relation to the credibility of our University College.

The Darwin Institute of Technology is a college of excellence. I have never questioned that nor has any member of the government. The Darwin Institute of Technology is a TAFE college. There is no doubt that it offers quality, advanced education courses, but it is still a TAFE college and two-thirds of the college is TAFE. No other TAFE college has a university component attached to it.

I would be most concerned if that were to be the case. The person who has been pushing the reform of tertiary education is the Chairman of CTEC and his name is Hugh Hudson. He holds a belief that the 3 tiers of tertiary education - TAFE, advanced education and university - should be all under the 1 roof. That is what the opposition is proposing and I am not saying that it would not work. It may be a sensible move but the fact is that it has never been done.

If any university in Australia were asked to amalgamate with a TAFE college, the result could be predicted. There is no question that there would be a violent response from the lecturers. It will be recalled that difficult times were experienced when colleges of advanced education were amalgamated with universities. That was a difficult path to tread and the lecturers in the colleges of advanced education and the universities were most concerned

about that move. It happened and it worked but the major point is that we want university education in the Territory that cannot be questioned. I am not saying that there would not have been university courses of high standing but they must be seen to be of high standing. This continued emphasis by the opposition about including a university college at the Darwin Institute of Technology has to be challenged. It is disappointing that it does not accept that we do not want to be guinea pigs and our children do not want to be guinea pigs. If you want to put a TAFE component into a university, go down to the University of Sydney or Queensland and try it out there. If it is accepted, then fine, come to the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I emphasise again that there is no question about the Darwin Institute of Technology being a college of excellence. It is required by people of the Territory and it is disappointing to me that members of the opposition, who are not here tonight, continue with the proposal to establish a university college at the Darwin Institute of Technology. If they gave us support and supported the students of the Territory having university education available to them - and not just 20, 40 or 60 students - I am sure that we would be able to bring the Commonwealth to its senses more quickly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for MacDonnell touched on 2 issues which related specifically to my portfolio. The first concerned executive housing. He wrote to me some time ago about concerns he had over abuses with executive housing. I might add that I was disappointed to hear on the radio one morning that the member for MacDonnell had said that abuses were occurring. No one had contacted me. I heard first about it through the media. My immediate response is that I would be concerned too if there were abuse of the executive housing provisions. If a member has any concern, please let me know and I will chase up the matter. Members should not just go out to the media and say that there is a problem before the matter has been checked. I have addressed the problem that the member for MacDonnell raised and I have given answers to him.

He wrote to me in relation to his concern about the director's eligibility on 2 grounds. First, he said that the director's spouse or entities with which he was associated owned houses in Katherine and Darwin. Secondly, he was concerned that the director had equity in another house in Darwin. His assertions about the director's marital status were incorrect and, if he has further proof to support what he is saying, I would be interested to see it. However, the director's eligibility for executive housing was determined in the context of the following facts. I will give them to honourable members because I think the matter is important.

The Director of the Technical and Maintenance Division was employed as Katherine Manager by the Department of Transport and Works from December 1983 to August 1985. During her tenure as area manager in Katherine, the director did not occupy Housing Commission accommodation. The director was promoted to the level of executive E4 with the Housing Commission and took up duty on 12 August 1985. The director is a supporting parent and the member for MacDonnell mentioned that. She is not married and does not have a de facto spouse. The member for MacDonnell refutes that. That is up to him, but I am saying that, on the basis of information that I have been provided with, that is the case. The director commenced tenancy of executive housing at 6 Goldsmith Street, Fannie Bay on 3 December 1985. The director's marital status was that of single supporting parent when her tenancy commenced. The director had equity in a property at 41 Borella Circuit, Jingili. The property passed from dual ownership to single ownership in 1978. The property was first advertised for sale in February 1985. The director relinquished

title to the property on 9 August 1985 and the title was transferred on 16 December 1985. The director holds title to a block of land at Lot 4786 Legune Avenue, Leanyer. I might say here that ownership of land does not affect eligibility for commission accommodation.

In relation to eligibility, the member for MacDonnell also mentioned that he advocated the provision of Housing Commission accommodation to people with particular expertise who are recruited outside the Territory, and that executive housing not be available to home-grown executives where they are required to transfer between centres. I might say that those criteria are basically consistent with those used currently by the Housing Commission.

The member for MacDonnell also raised the issue of health services to Aboriginal communities and he said that I had not responded to the comments he made in debate on the Appropriation Bill. I am sorry if I did not do that. I believed that I had responded. Mr Deputy Speaker, might I just emphasise that, in line with the Northern Territory government's policy of promoting Aboriginal self-management, the Department of Health encourages Aboriginal management in health care. Where the Department of Health and particular communities agree that a satisfactory level of service can be provided solely by Aboriginal health workers, such arrangements are implemented. The member for MacDonnell referred to 3 communities in which we believe that the Aboriginal health workers are able to take over the work that is required. I think that, in line with the government's policy of encouraging Aboriginals to work and take responsibility for their communities, that is a reasonable way to go.

I emphasise that, in such circumstances, the health workers are supported by regular visits from medical and nursing staff and that radio or telephone communication with medical staff is available on a 24-hour basis by means of radio-equipped vehicles. These arrangements are monitored very carefully by government and, if there is a concern in relation to the provision of a service, then government will look at it. However, wherever Aboriginals can involve themselves in their communities, we are supporting and encouraging them. As I said, progress will continue to be monitored very carefully.

In closing, I would like to comment on the member for Arnhem's remarks on the subject of petrol sniffing. He mentioned the possibility of legislation being introduced in relation to this problem. It may be necessary to do something like that as we search for the best approach in relation to this problem. A great deal of discussion is taking place about petrol sniffing. It is of major concern to many people in communities throughout the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. The issues will be discussed at a ministerial meeting on 28 November. I emphasise that it was this government that first initiated the meetings which are taking place on this issue.

I am sure that, as we talk to people and listen to their experiences, we will be able to come up with a satisfactory solution. However, the problem will not be solved overnight, and it is no good our shooting off our mouths and saying this is what we should do and that is what we should do, because no one fully understands the very complicated issues associated with petrol sniffing. Every community has a different view. The Minister for Community Development spoke about 1 method which a community used to solve its petrol sniffing problem.

There is another example that I could give, and I have mentioned it before. Pularumpi had a problem with petrol sniffing and the community

decided to put those children involved out on Harris Island. It is a good name, Mr Deputy Speaker. The children were left there for a week with bread and water and a spear. They were left there to fend for themselves. There has been no more petrol sniffing at Pularumpi. Like the Minister for Community Development, I am not saying that this is the method we should agree to, but I believe that the parents in those communities themselves have the opportunity to make those decisions. I am not going to interfere in those decisions. That example shows that, when a community looks at the problem and take a conscious decision on a particular direction or method of operation, it can actually succeed in wiping out petrol sniffing. That fact has to be considered carefully.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

REPORT  
Annual Report of Northern Territory Local Government  
Grants Commission

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, it is with great pride and pleasure that I table in the Assembly the first annual report of the Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission. Earlier this year, I introduced legislation to create this commission, and now I am able to present the report of this very significant first year of operation.

As I mentioned when introducing the Local Government Grants Commission Bill in the June sittings, the Commonwealth government passed new legislation for the distribution of funding to local governments throughout Australia: the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act which received assent on 24 June 1986. Our complementary Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission Bill, introduced and passed in the June sittings of this Assembly, like its federal counterpart, came into operation on 1 July 1986.

As I mentioned in response in the discussion of a matter of public importance in this Assembly on Tuesday 11 November, the Territory responded with speed and practicality in establishing and operating the Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission. These events are scheduled and detailed in the report. This first report is comprehensive. It lays the foundations for future provision and development of financial assistance to municipal and community governments, that very important third tier of government in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory government recognises fully the importance of a sound financial base for local government, and is keen to ensure that local government can reflect community needs, wishes and aspirations appropriately.

In a very short time this year, the commission visited and took submissions from 54 of the 56 local governing bodies. This achievement has not only set a cracking pace for future Grants Commission activities, but has enabled local community leaders to present their case to the commission personally. My own experience of following the Grants Commission's activities on the ground, particularly in east Arnhem and the Centre, was that community leaders were very happy with the opportunity to meet with the commission and present their case personally. This involvement of local community leaders represents yet another step in the Territory government's policy of self-management.

During the discussion of the matter of public importance I referred to earlier, mention was made of the desirability of the level of grants being known early in the financial year. I acknowledge that there is some truth in that, but I must clarify the distinction between financial estimates and the actual levels of the grants. The Grants Commission does not know the total amount of money it has to distribute until both the Commonwealth and the Territory budgets have been brought down - that is, very late in August. It has then to recommend a distribution and report to me following which I am bound to have my federal counterpart, the Commonwealth minister, agree to the proposed Commonwealth parts of any grant.

Regrettably, this year, the federal minister took from 26 September to 5 November, a period of 41 days, to approve the grants and we still do not have the money. The cheque is still in the mail. Obviously, there is little that the Northern Territory government can do about this part of the process.



Clearly, given the date of the Territory's budget, if the federal minister takes 6 weeks to approve grants, then the municipal councils cannot know their actual level of grant by the time they must finalise their estimates on 20 September each year. However, I emphasise that the councils set estimates, not actual figures.

The approximate level of the amount of the Commonwealth grant to local government was known from the beginning of the financial year but a precise figure was not available until after the Commonwealth budget on 19 August. Similarly, the total amount of the Northern Territory government's operational subsidy to local government was known from the budget speech of 26 August. Once this total amount of finance was known to municipal councils, I believed that they would be in a position to make a very accurate estimate of their likely level of combined grant. However, I acknowledge that the system could be improved. I am instructing the Grants Commission to prepare preliminary estimates of both the likely Commonwealth grant and the likely Northern Territory operational subsidy as soon as possible after the 2 budgets and to advise the municipal councils accordingly within a week of the date of the Northern Territory government's budget.

Mr Speaker, perhaps the most important aspect of the Grants Commission and its report is that it recognises smaller communities in the Territory as a full part of the local government system and, accordingly, for the first time is financing them with Commonwealth funds. The Grants Commission has a significant role to play in furthering this government's policy of self-management for smaller communities and in furthering community government. It will develop further methodology in future years and will consult with the appropriate representative bodies before putting any such methodology into place.

In appendix 7 of the report, members will see a list of categories for declaration. These categories have been developed to provide as objective a method as possible of determining when a body may be recognised as a local governing body. The current list of 44 local governing bodies outside the Local Government Act has been used for the present year only and continuous review of these declared other local governing bodies will take place.

I congratulate the Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission on its endeavours during this inaugural year and I have much pleasure in commending this significant first annual report to honourable members. I move that the Assembly take note of the report.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER  
Children's Services Task Force Report

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I table the Children's Services Task Force Report.

The task force was established in December 1985 by my predecessor as Minister for Community Development, the present Treasurer, who was concerned that more attention should be given to the direction to be taken in relation to children's services in the Territory. The task force was provided with terms of reference which required it to look 5 to 10 years into the future and to report on the options available for the range of children's services. The terms of reference specifically required consideration of options for such matters as funding, consultative mechanisms, qualification requirements for

child day-care workers and the relationship of child day-care to other services for young children. The task force was chaired by a previous member of this Assembly, Ms Dawn Lawrie. Mrs Kathleen Heyhoe from Darwin was well placed to put the views of private child-care centres and Ms Jennifer Wilson of Alice Springs had extensive experience in the operation of community-based centres.

The task force took its job seriously. It has presented a report consisting of some 277 pages, making over 50 recommendations on a wide variety of matters. I am quite sure that the document will be an important addition to research and policy development. While I am impressed with the amount of work which has been done, I have some concern about the basic theme of the report. The difficulty which I have with this theme flows through, as logically it must, to the recommendations made by the task force.

The task force seems to have made the assumption that the primary responsibility for the care and development of children in the community rests not with families but with the community. The task force makes the point that 'the concept that child care as a nurturing function, primarily undertaken by women at home, is no longer accurate'. It is asserted that 'it is now much more widely accepted that child care, with an appropriate educational component, is a community responsibility'.

I have no difficulty whatsoever with carriage by the government, on behalf of the community, of responsibility for the welfare of those children who are found to be in need of care. Clearly, the community has a responsibility to pick up those children who are not being cared for by their families in what the community identifies as an acceptable manner. Similarly, I welcome the involvement of the government in providing assistance to those in the community who seek child day-care services. Shortly I will sign an agreement with the Commonwealth which will see a further 2 community child day-care centres established in the Territory before July 1988, and I am proposing to the Administrator regulations which will be the basis for conditions which will be imposed to provide a minimum standard in all child-care centres in the Territory. I believe this to be a legitimate and reasonable responsibility of the Territory government. Where a service is provided in such an area, we should ensure that standards apply on which the community may rely.

The task force sees a different role for the government on behalf of the community. It states that it is not accurate to say that women in the home have primary carriage of the care and development of children. I agree that the responsibility is not one for women alone. It is, however, a responsibility which should be carried by a family. I am aware that, over a period of years, the role of the family in Australian society has changed. I am also aware that perception of the responsibility carried by families for their members may have changed. The change has occurred for a variety of reasons: the Family Law Act has allowed for more simple divorce, women have fought for a different role and have moved into the work force and pressure on the institution of the family has resulted. Nevertheless, the appropriate response by government to the desire of women to enter the work force is not to take over responsibility for their children. The appropriate response is to address the real issue which is how to assist most effectively families to undertake their responsibilities where such assistance is required.

The assumption made by the task force that the community will and should assume primary responsibility for children's services is carried through into recommendations which are made. For instance, the task force recommends a strong thrust towards professionalisation of child day-care. It makes

6 recommendations in this area. I agree that there should be minimum levels of qualified staff in child-care centres. Generally, in future, I will be imposing requirements in that regard as conditions of issue of a licence. I am less enthusiastic, however, about the recommendation for a registration system for child-care workers.

The task force makes a large number of recommendations for increased service provisions and these include: provision of incentives for developers of new estates to include child-care centres; the provision of child-care centres in all new facilities where more than 50 adults are housed; and provision of 1 child-care place for every 4 children in the 0-to-4 age group. The price tag to meet these recommendations is quite beyond what the taxpayer is willing to pay.

The task force was asked to look 5 to 10 years into the future. Many of the recommendation made and the research which has been done will be of great assistance in the development of policy and directions to be followed. I do not agree that child day-care should or will develop to the extent that it will take responsibility for the care and development of children. There are already indications that the level of child day-care places provided in current centres, together with services planned over the next 2 years, is quite adequate to meet community needs. I am confident, however, that the community will continue to expect quality child-care and will seek some assistance from the government in its provision.

Having expressed some divergence from aspects of the report from this government's policies which are aimed at strengthening the role of the family, I should say that the government is receptive to other aspects of the report. About one-third of the recommendations of the task force have been or are currently being actioned although not always precisely as recommended. For instance, clearly the government supports the role and function of the Children's Services Planning Committee. The Children's Services Bureau has been asked specifically to implement 2 recommendations which were identified as urgent by the task force. Information on in-service training for child-care workers is being collected for dissemination, and the bureau will be developing a policy on the use of children's services by AIDS sufferers, as recommended.

At present, qualification levels and accreditation of child-care staff are the subject of a Commonwealth, state and Territory working party. I expect to have before me shortly proposals for regulations and conditions which address this subject. A triennium funding agreement, negotiated with the Commonwealth and in the process of being signed, provides for the funding of a non-government support and advisory service in 1987. The proposal for the establishment of neighbourhood houses is attractive. Some funding for such a proposal is available under the recently-negotiated family support program. These are not the only recommendations which will be implemented.

In due course, I intend to provide the Assembly with a detailed statement on the recommendations. In the meantime, I am pleased to table the report and move that the Assembly take note of it.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, at this stage I wish to take the opportunity to make a few comments on the subject of child-care and the delivery of children's services in the Northern Territory. It is clear that we cannot refer in any detail to the report that we have in front of us as we have not had time to look at it. Clearly, it is a very important issue, and I congratulate the government on its foresight and initiative in commissioning

the study. We share the concern about young people that the government has expressed in commissioning the study, and we urge members of the Assembly to peruse the report and to note its recommendations.

It is clear from the size of the report that the committee has taken its job seriously. I know that it travelled extensively throughout the Northern Territory and consulted a large number of people in a wide range of areas and occupational groups. The very need for such a study is indicative of the lack of planning and concern which has characterised this area in the past. It cannot be argued that the need for children's services is new. The battle for child-care facilities has been a long and arduous one in the Territory and, whilst there have been some victories, it is clear that there is still a long way to go. That was indicated by some of the comments in the minister's speech.

We believe that we should give our children every opportunity. They are our future. One day they will sit in here making the laws that govern our lives, and they will work to provide the taxes that will pay our pension cheques. Early childhood development professionals say that the first few years of a child's life are critical in its development. Quality care is the basic concern of every family and, as our society moves further and further away from the traditional family concept, child-care becomes a more critical issue.

In July 1985, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated that there were about 4 million families in Australia and 55% of those families had dependent children. Almost 86% of families with kids were married couples and 14% were sole-parent families. Of the 86% married couples, 53% had both parents employed. Between 1969 and 1985, the number of sole-parent families in Australia doubled, and I am sure circumstances in the Northern Territory are similar. In the Northern Territory, in 1976, there were 24 000 families and 1650 sole-parent families. In 1981, those figures jumped to 31 000 families and 3000 sole-parent families. Obviously, when the 1986 census figures become available, there will be a further significant jump in those figures. It is significant that, in the Northern Territory in the period between 1976 and 1981, the number of sole-parent families doubled. We have no reason to believe that this trend is not continuing and, as elected politicians, I think we are all aware that one of the groups most in need of support services from government is that of sole-parent families.

As we all know, the Northern Territory has a high number of children. In 1984, the national percentage of children in the population was 27.4%. In the Northern Territory, however, the percentage was 35.1%. In other words, we have 8% more children in our total population than the Australian average. These sorts of statistics demonstrate clearly that there is a growing need in the community for child-care and, given the high number of children in the Territory, our need is great.

Some parents make a choice that one of them will stay at home with the children. Many cannot afford the choice of raising a family on 1 income. In some families, both parents choose to work or have to work. If that is by choice, that is acceptable in our modern society. If it is by necessity, against the parental inclination, it is regrettable. In either case, children are not the sole responsibility of women. Most children have 2 parents and, in that case, it is a joint responsibility. We acknowledge the right of individuals to make choices about whether they work or not, if they are in the fortunate position to be able to make a choice.

Children's services are not simply a matter of child-care. It is not just a matter of minding children so that mum or dad can go out to work. Far more than that is involved. It is about children needing to gain skills and great benefits from interaction with other children. They develop these skills best in a creative social environment. Children's learning starts from day 1 and, as the needs of the growing children change, we must provide facilities and services that help them reach their maximum potential. We know that, unfortunately, there are children whose potential is limited by handicaps or impairments. As we heard in a debate last week and again in question time this morning, our disabled children are severely disadvantaged under this government. There are desperate needs evident in this area which I hope this report addresses. It is an area that this government continues to ignore, but it cannot continue to do so. I am confident that, if this task force has investigated the particular needs of handicapped children thoroughly, it will have discovered them to be substantial and unmet.

Isolated kids in remote areas also face particular needs. The families of those kids must be extremely concerned about opportunities for their young ones to partake of the type of services which are available to their urban counterparts. Aboriginal kids need catering for in a way that takes account of their cultural development. Kids of different ethnic origins need to be able to span 2 cultures and accommodate both. I know we bring the different needs of these groups to the government's attention continually. We believe that each cultural and each disadvantaged group has a right to services tailored to its needs. We must take account of the differences in our society and acknowledge different requirements.

Emergency care is another area of concern. In a society where families are young and mobile, there is no extended family to help by stepping into the breach in case of an emergency. We need to be very aware of the society in which we live and the unique needs of its citizens, both young and adult. We are concerned about the needs of our young people and we are concerned also about the rights of their parents. Child-care is a community issue and should be a community service.

The opposition welcomes the report and looks forward to the chance to analyse it in some depth at a later time.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I wish to address one section of the report only, and to make a few very pertinent remarks to the responsible minister. The section of the report I wish to address is paragraph 12.7, on page 231, which is headed 'Child Counselling Services'. In making my remarks to the minister, I am indebted to the member for Stuart for his services in eliciting in this Assembly yesterday the minister's views on this particular section of the report.

I will read the section of the report:

As far as the task force is aware, there are no services outside the school system which offer counselling for young children. And yet, indications are that there is a greater need for such assistance than perhaps ever before. The breakdown of families can create huge stresses for children where adult resolution of conflict is not achieved. The incidence of child physical, sexual and emotional abuse is being increasingly reported in the Northern Territory.

Indeed, we all know that it is. That is why it deserves to be said in this Assembly, that the minister who has just tabled this report should hang

his head in shame at the statements that he made in the Legislative Assembly yesterday which absolutely appalled me.

As someone who has had some experience over the years, both through the work I did with the St John Ambulance Brigade and also through my experience in 3 youth organisations, particularly with petrol sniffers in Aboriginal communities in my electorate where petrol sniffing has been a problem for some time, I had considerable difficulty in actually believing that the minister responsible for the administration of child welfare services in the Northern Territory could make the statements that he made in the Assembly yesterday. The person who made those statements is the minister responsible for administering the Child Welfare Act and the minister who has just tabled a report which contains a whole section dealing with the need for services for counselling children who have been subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

With absolute sincerity I say that, unless the minister is prepared to stand up in this Assembly in response to this debate, withdraw the statements that he made yesterday and say that he is thoroughly ashamed for making them, he is not fit to be the minister. Yesterday, the minister regaled the Assembly with descriptions of the methods that have been used by some Aboriginal people to try to cure kids of petrol sniffing. I am familiar with some of those methods and I am utterly opposed to them because they do not work. They leave kids terrorised and emotionally and physically scarred for life. Aboriginal traditional custom included not only corporal punishment but capital punishment as well. In the days when there was no other system of justice, those customs worked extremely well because they were appropriate to those times. Aboriginal people have a dynamic culture that grows with the times.

The other problem is that both physical or corporal punishment and certainly capital punishment are prohibited, not just by the Child Welfare Act which the honourable minister is in charge of administering, but by the Northern Territory's Criminal Code. In fact, the penalties for inflicting grievous bodily harm on minors are very severe indeed. It is called aggravated assault. The honourable minister is an ex-police officer and I am sure he would be well aware of the aggravation where these offences are committed against children younger than the age of 14 and so on.

His statement was appalling, delivered as it was at a time when, under the pretence of carrying out so-called discipline, physical abuse is becoming absolutely endemic in the Northern Territory and is before the courts almost every day of the week. I should hardly need to remind the honourable minister of a couple of horrible examples that have occurred in the Northern Territory where children were disciplined for crying all night or urinating in the wrong place by being locked up in cupboards for 4 hours and later murdered and dumped in the bush. We have authority for that sort of discipline now, Mr Speaker, and it has been given by the minister responsible for administering the Child Welfare Act.

Yesterday, in the Assembly, - and he stands condemned by his words and he cannot escape them - he said that he advocated 'flogging kids to within an inch of their lives'.

Mr Dale: I did not.

Mr B. COLLINS: The Hansard provides a better record, Mr Speaker. I quote the minister: 'The community fixed their problems there by flogging the kids

to within an inch of their lives. Mr Ede: Do you approve of that? Mr Dale: I believe what they told me. Mr Ede: Do you approve of it? Mr Dale: If it stops petrol sniffing, yes'.

Mr Dale: That is where they left a bit out of the report, mate.

Mr B. COLLINS: Rubbish! Mr Speaker, in response to that, I am happy to have the minister correct it. But, is he going to blame Hansard for this one? I accept his interjection that something was missed out of the record and, if he wants to correct it in the Assembly now, let him. But, how is he going to fix this one up? Is this a Hansard mistake too? Again, I will quote: 'Mr Dale: I have already put this on the record. You have not been listening. As I said the other day, a broken arm ...' - and Mr Ede interjected, 'Within an inch of their lives, you said', - '... will heal but brain damage from petrol sniffing will not'.

Mr Perron: It sounds pretty logical.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, that is precisely what I would expect from the member for Fannie Bay.

Mr Speaker, I am not saying that all members of this Assembly would disagree with this method of disciplining their children or other people's children. However, I disagree with it. The minister then went on to say: 'If you give me the choice for any kid in the Northern Territory, I will break his arm any time'. If that is a Hansard mistake, perhaps the honourable minister can fix that too. That is an appalling statement to come from the minister responsible for administering the Child Welfare Act of the Northern Territory. I want to assure the honourable minister that, if people do as he suggests and if, under the guise of discipline, they break children's arms, as he has said that he would do himself - and if that is a Hansard mistake, let us hear about that too - they will not only be acting in gross contravention of the Child Welfare Act that he administers, but they would be in dead trouble with the Northern Territory's Criminal Code for aggravated assault and, if convicted of that offence, would be put away for a considerable period of time, and rightly so.

Mr Speaker, I have witnessed serious physical assaults on children under the guise of discipline for petrol sniffing both by Aboriginal people and by non-Aboriginal people. From my own observations, I will tell you what it does. It is like the 2 km drinking law. Sometimes, it succeeds in stopping the child from petrol sniffing because some of these children - and one of them whom I saw was a disgusting sight and only 8 years of age - are so totally and utterly terrorised by the experience of being physically assaulted by an adult that they do stop petrol sniffing or whatever else they are doing wrong for 2 or 3 days, and then they go straight back to it - but, they go back to it physically and emotionally scarred for life.

I am disgusted at any member of the public, whether it is the member for Fannie Bay or not, who can seriously advocate physical assault as being a proper method for disciplining children or correcting what they are doing wrong, no matter what it is - whether it is heroin abuse or anything else. Thuggery does not assist a child to grow up with any kind of balanced view on life, particularly when it is practised by the child's parents - as it so often is - under the guise of discipline.

Mr Speaker, it will be an interesting situation the next time an adult is in a Northern Territory criminal court charged with the heinous offence of

physically abusing a child and causing grievous bodily harm to that child. He will stand up in the witness box and say: 'The Northern Territory's minister for child welfare said it was a good idea because my kid was sniffing petrol, Your Honour. The minister said that a good way of fixing that was to break his arm. In fact, the minister went on to say that, if it was a choice between petrol sniffing and aggravated assault, he would be prepared to break his arm for him'.

The member for Fannie Bay may have the luxury of expressing views like that if he wants to because he is sitting on the backbench. He can support it, as he clearly does. But, I suggest that the minister responsible for controlling the act that deals with child abuse in the Northern Territory does not have the same privilege. I am sure he does not claim to be an expert on child welfare because he is the minister. Who in here claims to be an expert about anything we deal with? We are simply politicians. If the minister reflects for a moment, I am sure he will not need any of the experts in his department - and I share his regard for the staff in that department - to tell him that aggravated physical assault on a child is a terrifying, horrible, life-scarring experience for that child and is a totally inappropriate way of administering discipline, whether it is done by an Aboriginal person or anyone else.

We have heard all this garbage from the minister, who has become a latter day convert to Aboriginal self-determination because of a whistle-stop tour around Northern Territory Aboriginal communities, that because Aboriginal people tell him it is all right to beat kids almost to death, that it is a good thing to do and that that justifies it. It does not. You want to run that past my wife, Mr Speaker, to see what she thinks about it as a good traditional punishment.

Mr Speaker, the honourable minister has already gone so far as to say, in respect of the first matter in the Hansard record of the Assembly, that it is wrong. I invite him to correct it now.

Mr Dale: I did not say that it was wrong; I said that something was left out.

Mr B. COLLINS: Well, I would like him to insert what was left out. But, I would like him to make it absolutely and categorically clear that he withdraws any encouragement for any adult in the Northern Territory, for any reason whatsoever, to commit grievous bodily harm and aggravated assault on a minor.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thought we were to discuss the Children's Services Task Force Report. However, it appears that the member for Arafura has taken the opportunity to raise a matter I thought he would probably raise a little later.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me assure all honourable members of this Assembly that, most certainly, I do not advocate child abuse in any form. In fact, I have worked very hard in my career as a policeman and in community life towards the exact opposite. I have no hesitation in saying that. During the debate yesterday, and in the course of a number of other debates, I have touched on this matter. I did so during the discussion on a matter of public importance, as can be seen from page 67 of the daily Hansard for Tuesday 11 November. The point that I am trying to make to this Assembly and to all members of the community of the Northern Territory, particularly those in the Aboriginal communities, is that petrol sniffing is a problem in the Aboriginal



communities at the moment. I hope to God it does not extend outside of that area. Moreover, I hope it is eliminated from within the ranks of the Aboriginal communities.

Mr B. Collins: It's been there for a long, long time.

Mr DALE: The implication is that I am some sort of a bully. Well, I am if I have to be to push the point to the public that we have a desperate situation in Aboriginal communities. The debate yesterday resulted from a statement by the member for Arnhem that the Northern Territory government was asking petrol sniffers to go to homelands. He argued that point. I argued that that was not the case; it was the community who recommended that.

We spoke about the communities at Angurugu and Umbakumba and I spoke about the young children who stand by the river banks at Angurugu sniffing petrol and blowing their minds out. I mentioned to him in the debate yesterday that the people down the road at Umbakumba, a 1½-hour drive away, do not have a petrol-sniffing problem. I was told that the reason there was no petrol-sniffing problem in that community was because disciplinary action had been taken by way of the community beating the children. I had been told that the beating was so severe that, unfortunately, I believe, bones were broken. Mr Deputy Speaker, I refer you to Tuesday's debate, when I said that.

Mr B. Collins: A serious offence is committed as a result.

Mr Ede: What action did you take?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr DALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been pointing out to the members of the opposition that this is not something that we can sit back and watch go by. In my view, that particular incident points up the desperation of people in various communities. I do not advocate it. I simply point out how desperate people are. I have been trying to illustrate that desperation to the honourable members on the opposition benches and get them to join with the Northern Territory government in efforts to do something about this problem.

As the honourable member for Arafura interjected a moment ago, it has been going on for years. I do not pretend to be a great saviour, a knight in shining armour who will thunder into the place and cure all problems, but certainly I will not sit back and watch kids die. That is what is happening in the Northern Territory. The point I was trying to illustrate is that a broken bone is better than a broken mind. If anybody can convince me that the better option is the latter, then let them do so.

Mr B. Collins: You are telling people to break the law.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will resume his seat.

Honourable members on both sides of the Assembly will cease their noisy interjections and allow the honourable minister the courtesy of some quiet during his response.

Mr DALE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am desperate as well. I am desperate as minister, as are a number of ministers around Australia who have started to listen finally to the voice of the Northern Territory government which is trying to come to

terms with this unique problem. As you would be well aware, on 28 November this year, there will be a meeting in Alice Springs which will involve a number of ministers from the states and from the federal government. We have to look for some way to eradicate the enormous problem of petrol sniffing. The only way that we can eradicate it, in my view, is at a community-based level. The health problems of those who have been damaged must be addressed by the Minister for Health and his counterparts elsewhere. I believe that the only way to prevent, and thereby eradicate, petrol sniffing in Aboriginal communities is to move the responsibility back to the relevant local community. That is what I have been trying to illustrate.

My mention of the fact that people have been so desperate that they have beaten kids, apparently breaking a bone in one case, does not mean that I am a child beater, a child molester or in any other way a child abuser.

Mr Ede: You said you advocate it.

Mr DALE: I reject that in any shape or form. We were using colloquialisms in the debate yesterday, Mr Deputy Speaker, and that is precisely what it was all about. If anybody got my meaning wrong, so be it, but I definitely intend to carry on with the same enthusiasm and same integrity that this government has shown in this area for quite some time.

Mr Ede: The same lack of intelligence.

Mr PALMER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I draw your attention to standing order 239(e). You have already warned members opposite about continual interjections.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Chair will be the authority on interjections.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I summarise by saying that it disappoints me, once again, that the only real contribution that members of the opposition have made to finding a solution to the petrol-sniffing problem to date is to draw long bows as they have tried to do today. If they want to cut down my reputation, so be it. Let them waste their time doing that because, frankly, they are doing little else. Let them exercise their brains on that subject.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The minister will resume his seat. I have been extremely tolerant with the member for Stuart. I warn him, for the final time, about interjections.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, their counterparts in the states are far more responsible in their attitude to this problem. To that end, they will be meeting with the Minister for Health and myself in Alice Springs on 28 November. I look forward to that meeting. I look forward to some constructive debate on the subject. I look to some rationalisation in our joint thinking on the subject and I hope to God that we can find some way of resolving this particular problem. I am all about the saving of lives of kids of this Northern Territory and this country of ours and I will be as aggressive as I have to be about it. If I have to use colloquialisms to get the message across, so be it. Nobody can ever accuse me of being anything but responsible in the area of total child care.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT  
Government Aboriginal Affairs Initiatives

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement to honourable members on the policy and program initiatives that the government is developing and implementing in respect of Aboriginal affairs. I do so because I am concerned that an attitude of negativism has been portrayed by some members of the opposition. You will recall my comments during discussion of a matter of public importance last Tuesday.

The cornerstone of my government's policy on Aboriginal matters is that the Aboriginal community represents a significant and important group in Northern Territory society. In recognising this, often overlooked is the simple fact that the government's policy is one of self-management which, if fully developed and implemented, allows Aboriginal communities to develop on their own terms and thereby maintain their cultural and social imperatives. The recognition of this policy and its implications is essential if we are to have a fully-represented and respected Northern Territory society as we move toward statehood.

The policy of self-management is a dynamic one and rests on the premise that Aboriginal communities are in the best position to determine and manage their own affairs. The implication of this policy is that vested interest groups, such as the land councils, who have claimed previously to speak for Aboriginal people, must accept that self-management means just that, and that there is no room for patronage or paternalism from any side.

Mr Speaker, I said self-management is a dynamic policy and we feel it can be achieved through community government. Let there be no doubt that, just as municipal government is the level of government responsible for delivering a range of services required and expressed at the community interest level, so too is community government for small communities, whether they be Aboriginal or otherwise. Through community government, Aboriginal communities are able to manage their own affairs within a policy of self-management. My concern is that members of the opposition and some other groups either do not understand the rationale behind the concept of community government or are deliberately setting out to misinform wherever possible.

The changes that we, as a government, have implemented have been far-reaching and, let me say, not without some discomfort to some people. Some of the changes that we have had to implement in order to guarantee the integrity of the policy are: the inclusion of community government within the new Local Government Act on an equal basis with municipal government; position for the option of a community government association equal to the local government association; transfer of all funds for Aboriginal essential services to my department; encouragement of a policy of non-bureaucratic management and delivery of essential services; the acceptance that community government has equal status with municipal councils in the distribution of untied Commonwealth financial assistance; the establishment of a Northern Territory Grants Commission to distribute Commonwealth and Northern Territory moneys on an untied basis; the support and development of training and development programs for Aboriginal community leaders; the use of independent consultants to work with communities to identify their essential service requirements; the continuation and extension of an Aboriginal communications unit to present material of interest to Aboriginals; the employment of a consultant to review potential for economic enterprises that Aboriginal communities could become involved in on their terms; the development of community infrastructure plans which will enable communities to develop and

plan to meet their community needs on their terms and according to their priorities; the employment of Professor David Turner with a brief to advise whether our policy programs are in tune with Aboriginal expectations - the result of his work was the Turner Report which would be well known to honourable members; initiatives developed in conjunction with Aboriginal community leaders to create a community-based response to petrol sniffing and substance abuse generally; and a special program created in my department to assist Aboriginal women with the establishment of family resource centres.

Mr Speaker, the above list describes only the tip of the iceberg because, as more communities take up community government and advance their own development so will the need increase for my department and others to change and respond. We have in place a mechanism to coordinate the effects of this policy across the bureaucracy - the Northern Territory Coordination of Aboriginal Programs. My department manages its affairs through a strategic planning process and already I have been presented with scenarios that we will have to adopt in the next few years to ensure that the viability and strength of self-management is maintained.

It will not have escaped the attention of honourable members that I have emphasised the dynamic nature of this policy issue. Hence honourable members will fully understand my disgust when apologists and so-called specialists on Aboriginal matters try to protect patronage, paternalism or any ism of Aboriginalism. We all have to change, and that includes the land councils. I am concerned that, because of the perceived threat that self-management poses to them, these councils say they support self-management whilst, because of their narrow tunnel vision - which stems from self-interest - they put forward a cute legal argument in an attempt to challenge the legality of community government. Mr Speaker, I have an example of that here in a telex from the Northern Land Council.

I stand ready to consult with any party to achieve self-management through community government. Let this be known unequivocally by all those who want to take such a line of opposition: if there is to be a challenge, I will see those responsible in court. It is with regret that I have to make this last point so strongly. My preferred role is one of consultation, with coordination of all agencies within the Territory, towards one common goal. Whatever we do, we must see ourselves collectively, as Territorians, with an overriding objective of achieving a statehood which responds to and recognises all Territorians. I have always held that the interests of the land rights movement and community government should not clash. Land councils, who are aware of this view, have an important role and function in representing traditional owners of land. The government recognises this fully and supports it. However, we cannot support and will never sanction any attempt for the legitimate role and function of the land councils to be abused and misdirected, for whatever reason, to thwart our prime policy of self-management through community government.

Mr Speaker, let the record show that I am prepared to meet and consult with the land councils, but I am not prepared to concede or compromise the primacy of self-management. Our commitment is strong and we will take whatever action is necessary to defend this position. In so saying, I hope sincerely that goodwill, common sense and common purpose will prevail between all people and agencies involved with Aboriginal matters.

On the one hand, it is important that Aboriginal communities be allowed to develop on their own terms through self-management but, on the other hand, it is important that this be respected in order that common ground may be reached

so that, on achieving statehood, our society is rich, unified and cohesive with its individual parts respected for their differences. Our approach involves consultation and advocacy to ensure that the policy of self-management is implemented. It is one which requires considerable hands-on involvement. There is no room for armchair philosophy. We are dealing with an important group of Territorians, their feelings and their aspirations. From my own travel throughout the Territory and discussions with people in communities, I am convinced that we are on the right track. My visits to communities in all areas have enabled me to modify and emphasise certain components of our program as they affect these people.

Let me give a very simple example, the significance of which I am sure will not be lost on honourable members. While visiting some central Australian communities, health workers and women of the community were expressing the view that they did not need an extra Toyota truck. What they wanted was some simple audio-visual material on how to use a toilet, how to wash for hygiene purposes and how to maintain a home. This degree of sensitivity cannot be picked up sitting in an office developing grand ideas and defending so-called noble positions.

The fundamental key to the success of self-management is that we must respond to the wishes of Aboriginal people. This is why the community government scheme is so flexible and has a long and involved consultation process built into it. I put it to honourable members that this ability to respond to individual needs hold true for land councils, opposition members, Commonwealth ministers or any other group or agency involved in Aboriginal affairs.

To achieve common ground is not difficult. I repeat that I would prefer to achieve common ground through consultation rather than through conflict. I am heartened when my colleagues from South Australia, Western Australia and the Commonwealth are able to achieve commonality with us on important matters such as petrol sniffing and the need to respond to Aboriginal matters through self-management policies. If we can achieve common ground within the Territory on this important matter of self-management for Aboriginals, all of us will be providing leadership which will make the Territory, on achieving statehood, the jewel of Australia.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to highlight that, by his own words, the honourable minister condemns himself. His third paragraph contained a statement we all agree with: 'The cornerstone of my government's policy on Aboriginal matters is that the Aboriginal community represents a significant and important group in Northern Territory society'. That is excellent, Mr Speaker. Despite various statements made by government ministers to the contrary, we can start to hope that, at last, they are beginning to recognise Aboriginal people as citizens of the Northern Territory.

However, on page 7 of the statement, we find: '... modify and emphasise certain components of our program as they affect these people'. Mr Speaker, they are not 'these' people or 'those' people; they are people who are citizens of the Northern Territory. That fact does not seem to have got through to the honourable minister as yet. He continues to make ...

Mr Dale: I only said it about 20 times.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, there is an old saying that I heard somewhere ....

Mr Dale: Yes, patronise Aborigines.

Mr EDE: ... 'Hear the voice but listen to the echoes of the mind'.

Mr Speaker, I hear the minister's voice but I must also listen to the echoes of his mind. They reverberate through and around this empty statement. The walls are there, the bones of self-management, but there is no flesh. There are no new ideas in this statement. All we have is a new minister.

Mr Speaker, he talks of the urgency of his commitment to community government. I thought I might quote a paragraph from Hansard. This is Mr Isaacs speaking:

When the Chief Minister or the Minister for Community Development say there is no hurry, we put up some warning signals. I will read from the memo: 'Once some of our more urgent programs, such as the establishment of local government in Aboriginal communities, the ascertainment of the needs of these communities, the completion of the first grants commission exercise ... can be completed, there will be time for conferences'.

Mr Speaker, that statement was made on Wednesday 29 November 1978. Now, 8 years later, we hear the same statement from another Minister for Community Development. What have we got: 6 community governments in 8 years.

Mr Dale: 56 in the making.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, they are always in the making. They are always in the pipeline with this government. We heard that the funding is in the pipeline. Everything always has a high priority. The government is always across it.

Mr Dale: Look in the Grants Commission report that I gave you a couple of hours ago.

Mr EDE: It never ceases to amaze members on this side of the Assembly and, indeed, most Aboriginal people and people who have worked with them over the years. We never cease to be amazed by the antics of these Johnny-come-latelies, the 2-bob tourists who have a flip around the bush and act as though they have seen the light on the road to Damascus. Generally, we find their antics as amusing as their friends back in town find them boring. However, it is not so funny when the 2-bob tourist, the instant expert, the Johnny-come-lately, is the minister responsible.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member for Stuart will be heard in silence.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, we cannot smile indulgently, pat him on the head, give him a book and send him away to come back in 5 years time when he has had a chance to grow up because, unfortunately, he is the minister. However, I cannot resist the temptation to adjure the honourable minister not to try to teach his grandmother to suck eggs.

Mr Speaker, I will not go into detail and embarrass members opposite by pointing out just how much experience the opposition has had of this subject in comparison with their complete lack of experience. But, I do wish to lay

to rest a few of the shibboleths that are growing into accepted fact in the hands of successive tyros, these first-term, Darwin city slickers, the honourable backbenchers who become honourable Ministers for Community Development.

Let's get a few things straight about this scheme of community government which, time and time again, the honourable minister has stated is something that evolved here in the Northern Territory. We have given our support consistently to this scheme and I will comment later on some of the problems caused by the way it is being handled.

For now, let's get straight where this came from: community government followed from what was generally referred to as local government. Local government first evolved just after the war in East Africa. Local government was formed by the functions, powers and responsibilities of councils being written into an act. The essential difference with community government is that the powers and the functions are written into the scheme itself so that a council will have a constitution rather than the area of the council being designated and the powers and functions taken from an act. The powers and functions which are tailored to a particular community and scheme are actually set out in that constitution. I first came across the system some 15 years ago in Papua New Guinea. It was being developed there by provincial government as a means of countering the central government's local government model. After an initial period, which some of the people in the minister's department can tell him about, it was accepted as a very legitimate and worthwhile concept, enabling particular communities to take on the task of manicuring their own system of community government to fit their own needs.

This model was first used in Australia under the Commonwealth Aboriginal Councils and Associations Incorporation Act which was introduced in 1975. For the first time in Australia, that act enabled particular powers and functions to be incorporated into the constitutions of the individual schemes. It was not taken up to any great extent because, whilst the associations incorporation section of the act was seen by many urban groups as a model for an incorporated body which they could utilise rather than using the Northern Territory's Associations Incorporation Act, there was very little publicity as to the benefits of the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Incorporation Act of 1975, and there the matter rested. In fact, I know of no community in the Northern Territory that took up that act.

However, in 1978, a variation of the model was introduced into this Assembly by the then Minister for Community Development and, after the inclusion of a considerable number of amendments, many proposed by members on this side of the Assembly and a number proposed by the government, the legislation was passed and came into law. The first community that took up the offer, Lajamanu, is in my electorate. That community has had a chequered relationship with the scheme. In the early years, it was very happy with it. The people felt that it gave them the ability to perform quite a substantial number of functions which they had found very difficult to carry out before. Unfortunately, after 2 or 3 others developed community government, it appeared to the Lajamanu community that the pressure was off the government to take notice of it because it had other communities which it could hold up as ideals. Lajamanu went out of fashion, as the people described it to me.

The people of Lajamanu decided to utilise some funds which they had saved from other programs to put a road through to Tennant Creek, a project which the officers of the public service, the minister or whoever, did not agree with. The full weight of the bureaucracy came down on the community and the

people learnt that, while you may appear in law to have the ability to manage your own affairs under that legislation, the bureaucracy has a very tight rein on it all the way through. Community government is a good concept if it is handled properly. It has potential. However, it is not something which developed in the Northern Territory. It is something which we have taken and amended and it needs to be amended continually to fit the Northern Territory situation.

Mr Perron: That is what the minister just said in his statement.

Mr EDE: He also said in his statement that self-management 'is a dynamic policy and we feel it can be achieved through community government'. There are other ways that self-management can be achieved. Mr Bill Neidjie at Kakadu, for example, would like to achieve self-management amongst his people, but this government took him to court when he obtained his land, and it continues to exert pressure against his attempts to protect his sacred sites against the mining companies which keep on trying to persuade him to accept the blandishments they offer. He is trying to achieve self-management, but the Northern Territory government does not seem to believe in giving him any capacity to manage his own affairs.

The minister's statement said that community government is incorporated within the new Local Government Act on an equal basis with municipal government. I will not argue with that, but the minister spoke about the position for the option of a community government association equal to the Local Government Association. When we debated the grants commission bill many months ago, I asked him to provide us with a copy of the constitution of that new association. That has not come to me yet, and I do not know whether it has been drafted and accepted or whether it is just another one of those things that is in the wind somewhere.

Mr Dale: I think one thing you should do, Brian, is read the act. You really should sit down, mate, and take time out to read the act.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the act states that they will meet and draft a constitution.

Mr Dale: Read the act, mate.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the man is not on top of his own legislation. He stated further: '... the acceptance that community government has equal status with municipal councils in distribution of untied Commonwealth financial assistance'. Again, the minister does not understand his own legislation. We argued that point in here throughout the debate on the Grants Commission. We pointed out very clearly that the legislation created 2 pools of funding within the Grants Commission. A pool was appointed for municipal governments which had a guaranteed base with a guaranteed increase on the basis of variations in the CPI and changes in population from a standard base. It was only funding that was left over that would be used in community government.

At that stage, he refused to accept the concept of the priority of need, which is supposed to be one of the bases for the distribution of some 70% of that fund, and to look across the board at the priority of need, take into account effort neutrality of revenue-raising in the communities, and then apportion the funds accordingly. We have said before that, if that has not come about by the time that we assess next year's procedures, we will be moving an amendment, because it is just not on.



The minister spoke of the use of independent consultants to work with communities to identify their essential service requirements. From what I have seen of that process so far, it has been an absolute cop out. Somebody from the department goes out with a letter of appointment to a firm of consultants and another letter of acceptance of the grant for a particular capital works project and says: 'If you sign one, you sign the other'. I am led to understand that, in Alice Springs, some of the people who obtained the consultancy work are not the people who would have been recommended by the Department of Transport and Works. So far, all it has meant is that capital works have been delayed by many months because everyone has had to start from scratch again. The works that were in progress through the public service scheme could not proceed because the process had to be restarted with an outside consultant. As I said, it was a cop out. It meant that the government did not have to allocate the funds in the capital works program for that particular year. It was able to save the money and allocate it to other programs that it was keener about.

Mr Speaker, the minister spoke of the employment of Professor David Turner with a brief to advise. That is another one of the papers he has tabled in the Assembly which we have not had a chance to debate as yet.

Mr Speaker, on page 8 of the minister's statement there is a real lulu. It states that, when he visited Aboriginal communities, 'health workers and women of the community were expressing the view that they did not need an extra Toyota truck, but what they wanted was some simple audio-visual material on how to use a toilet, how to wash for hygiene purposes and how to maintain a home'. Is it possible that the minister has not realised that there may be a bit more in that than meets the eye? Is it possible that the minister does not yet realise that more than 50% of the people in my electorate - and I am sure in the electorate of the honourable member for MacDonnell and many others - do not have electricity to plug an audio-visual machine into? As to needing to know how to use a toilet, the vast majority of people do not even have toilets. We have been trying to get toilets for them for ages, Mr Speaker.

Mr Dale: Obviously, this group just got them; they want to learn how to use them.

Mr EDE: How to wash for hygiene purposes! As I have said time and time again, thousands of people do not have water to wash with! Before seeking to educate them through audio-visual material, they must have the water to wash with. We are in the latter half of the International Decade of Water yet, in the Northern Territory, we have not come anywhere near to matching the goals that we have set to be achieved for the third world during this decade. It is an absolute disgrace. I have to hang my head in shame over it because I have not been able to get it through the heads of the honourable ministers opposite that water is an absolute necessity.

Mr Dale: Stop telling lies to the people at Anningie. There is none there.

Mr EDE: The people of Anningie have water.

Mr Dale: They haven't.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, when it came under the Department of Transport and Works, officers of that department stated that they would put in a Mexican dam. However, when the honourable minister found consultants from outside the department, suddenly there were variations in the clay level.

Mr Dale: Because they investigated it.

Mr EDE: Therefore it could not be done.

Mr Dale: Correct.

Mr EDE: People who had worked for years in that area - people you know well, Mr Speaker - and public servants who had been investigating the problem agreed that a Mexican dam was the way to go and that it should have been done years ago. The previous minister said that he would do it but this minister has found himself a tame consultant who will say that it is not on. The minister does not know what he is talking about and has decided that he will not spend the money. You have to have water before you can wash! That statement by the honourable minister was total nonsense.

How to maintain a home: does the minister know what percentage of rural people have homes to maintain? Does he know that, at the current rate of construction of basic housing, it will take another 15 years before the people who are looking for houses now will obtain them? That does not take into account the fact that we have a pyramidal age structure which means that numerous people are moving into a wage bracket which will enable them to look for houses? It is necessary to have a house before you can maintain it. Most of the people in the electorates of members on this side of the Assembly do not have a house. They have a shanty or an old vehicle that they camp in or a few pieces of corrugated iron. They do not have water nearby, they do not have toilets and they do not have electricity to run audio-visual devices. The statement that all that is needed is audio-visual material on how to use a toilet, how to wash for hygiene purposes and how to maintain a home is nonsense. I am not saying that the minister is lying. He may have found 1 person who made a statement like that. It is always possible to go into any group and find 1 person who will make a statement like that, but that is what the honourable minister sees as consultation.

Mr Dale: It was a council meeting.

Mr EDE: The minister goes around until he finds 1 person who agrees with him, after he has pushed his ideas down his throat. He then says: 'Okay, that is what is needed'. That is the way that this honourable minister goes about his work. He makes 2-month, fly-by-night trips around the Territory and comes back to tell us that somehow he is now the full bottle, that he knows all about it.

Mr Speaker, in the early part of my speech, I quoted an old saying: 'Hear the voice, but listen to the echoes of the mind'. I listened to the echoes of the mind of the honourable minister opposite and I began to ask myself where the hidden agendas are in this, because so much of what he says does not match up with the realities in the bush. I heard his high-minded statements but I listened to the echoes of his mind and the remarks he made about land councils. I wonder whether this honourable minister is attempting to use a very good system of community government as a means of attacking the land councils?

He stated that his 'preferred role is one of consultation'. The attitude of this minister and the whole message that comes across every time he has a meeting with the land councils is one of outright confrontation. He has never sat down with them and said: 'Let's hear your side of it. This is my side of it. Let's agree on the ultimate objective and see how we can obtain it'. It is no wonder that they are losing their trust in what, basically, is a good system because of the way that the honourable minister is carrying on.

Mr Speaker, I have one major concern about what the honourable minister is doing. What I am most worried about is the way that the minister is handling the legislation. He is attempting to use it as a means of attacking the land councils and to manipulate people in the electorates. He fails to consult adequately with people about draft schemes before they are implemented.

Things like that will destroy people's belief in what is basically a good idea. What gets up my nose is that, when we on this side of the Assembly have an opportunity to implement a system of community government, the honourable minister will have already given it such a bad name that it will take me a year and a half to clean up his mess before I can sort it out. We have seen what sort of person the minister is: a man who talks about breaking childrens' arms because he is worried about the fact that they might sniff petrol.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There are far too many interjections. The honourable member will be heard in silence.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, that is the way he carries out his obligations under the Child Welfare Act. That is how high he sets his sights for his own personal conduct, as he stated in the Assembly last night. That is the message he gives to Territorians who are suffering through the terrible problems that we have with child abuse. That is the way he handles that particular piece of legislation. Is it any wonder that not only the land councils but I myself worry about the way he will administer this fine piece of legislation, the Local Government Act? Is it any wonder that we do not trust him? Is it any wonder that people start to look for hidden motives and wonder if there are more outrageous ideas lurking around in that dark little mind of his? Is it any wonder?

I reject 90% of the attitudes contained in the statement attributed to the minister. The parts that I accept are those that have been put in by the good officers in the department which substantially restate ideas that have been around for 8 years and which have considerable merit. Those are the parts of this statement that I support. The obvious tack-ons and the mad rantings of the minister, I reject.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, like most members on this side of the Assembly, I was interested, and I emphasise the word 'was', to hear the contributions of members opposite on this statement. Indeed, it was generally believed that they had something constructive to contribute on this subject even if they have little to offer on other subjects. This is because they represent a number of electorates that are populated to a very significant extent by Aboriginals living in remote areas and who, in many cases, live a traditional lifestyle.

However, having listened to the member for Stuart, I am somewhat appalled if that is the best contribution he can make towards advising the government constructively about how its policies might not be directly on track and how they might be changed in order to improve the lot of Aboriginal people as Territorians. He used all of the time that was allocated to him in this debate to put together a disgraceful string of words. He poured buckets on the minister who was under no obligation to present a statement on this subject today. That the minister made this statement shows his clear concern for this area of his portfolio.

In the middle of his speech, the member for Stuart let slip that community government, under the act, is good, adding as a qualification 'if it is run properly'. Of course we all hope that the communities run properly, and I doubt that anyone would claim that community government would be good if it were not run properly, if it were left deliberately to wander without any guidance and controls. Self-management does require some forms of control and the community government scheme imposes controls, just as local government imposes controls on how a community will run its affairs, spend its money, tax people, and so on. Of course, there are some controls and we would all advocate that the schemes should run properly.

What the member for Stuart should have been telling us is how, as a result of his vast experience, he believes the schemes are not being run at present as satisfactorily as they might be and why, and what the minister should be doing through his department to rectify the situation. The only other aspect of his speech which I could grasp was his great play about the minister's example of how a community indicated to him that an item proposed for funding was not the highest priority. The people concerned had a view that emphasis should be put somewhere else. The minister was talking about a request for some educational tools - in the forms of videos and audio material - about the use of toilets, washing for hygiene and home maintenance. Despite the rambling criticisms of the member for Stuart, I am sure that members opposite would be well aware of the great need for education concerning the maintenance of community assets in remote areas.

The member for Stuart implied that, whilst there are some people who do not have toilets - and I am sure there are plenty of them - we should not bother about spending any money on people who do to try to assist them to use those facilities properly and preserve them. They are very expensive items out in the bush, as all honourable members will be aware. Members are also aware that, in many cases, these appliances are unserviceable within a very short time of installation and they are often unserviceable for long periods of time. Often this occurs through misuse and, of course, education is needed in that regard. Do we abandon and ignore all those people who are fortunate enough to have reached the stage, under funding programs, where community toilets are built? Should we say: 'You have got yours. We are not going to pay any attention to you any longer. We are going off to build some more toilets in the scrub and if yours do not work in a week, that is too bad. When we have finished building toilets for everybody in the Northern Territory, we will come back and show you how to treat them properly so they will be working in 10 years time'. That is exactly what the member for Stuart was implying, and he was similarly non-constructive in his comments about a request for education on the use of water for hygiene purposes.

In contributing to an earlier debate, the honourable member made great play about the need for health services for Aborigines in the Northern Territory. Those requirements are certainly out of proportion to other sections of the community. We are all aware that there is a very great need in many areas for education relating to basic hygiene. That is completely understandable. I can understand it, and I am sure all honourable members of this Assembly can understand it. There is a very great need for it, and there would not be anyone associated with the Northern Territory health system who would disagree with that statement. There is a very great need for basic educational material and programs on hygiene practices, and specially-trained people are needed.

But the honourable member for Stuart says simply: 'What about those people who do not have any water? How can we teach them the benefits of using

it for hygiene as distinct from drinking it?' Does he mean that we should forget all those who have bores, water tanks, pumps, Mexican dams and windmills? Should we ignore all of them because they have water to drink? Does he mean that, until an adequate and reliable water supply is available to every single person in the Northern Territory, we should not worry about spending money on these educational programs?

He says the same about houses. He says that, at the current rate of construction, it will take 15 years to build sufficient houses to accommodate all Aborigines in the Northern Territory. He may well be right! I would not argue with him. However, I would make the point that I wonder whether every Aboriginal in the Northern Territory wants the sort of housing that we have today. I hope the consultative process goes well ahead of the construction program in an endeavour to determine whether a community or an individual family wants the houses that are proposed to be constructed for them. In my limited experience in the Northern Territory, many houses have been constructed in Aboriginal communities which, seemingly, have been rejected absolutely by those communities. Goodness knows the amount of money that has been poured into building homes and houses for Aboriginal communities over the past 50 years and which has been utterly and totally wasted. It may well have been wasted because the wrong types of houses were built, because the views of the communities were not properly ascertained. Houses may well have been built in the wrong places or too close together or whatever. I have no doubt that reasons of that kind would apply in many cases.

However, that still misses my point which is that, when communities receive houses, hopefully following proper consultation, they require education on the maintenance of those houses, and possibly some education about the subtleties of living in a house for people who have not done that traditionally in the past. The houses will become precious assets in the communities, particularly where people have worked a number of years for them. If effort is not put into a program educating people about their maintenance, the money will be wasted and the assets lost.

The member for Stuart's contribution to this debate, of extracting the minister's example, and suggesting that it shows a total change in the minister's attitude towards construction and funding programs for Aboriginal communities, is simply a nonsense. The minister chose a simple example of responsiveness, of obtaining a view that money was needed in a particular community for these things rather than some other things. The honourable member's representation of the electorate of Stuart should have equipped him to contribute constructively to this serious debate on future services needed by Aboriginal communities, the meaningful expenditure of taxpayers' money and an act which is designed - and I believe very well designed - to provide flexible systems to accommodate the needs of individual Aboriginal communities right across the Territory. Instead of using his expertise, he treated us to a stream of political drivel.

Mr Speaker, I would like to say that I too am concerned that the land councils, particularly the Northern Land Council, may be adopting an attitude that the community government scheme being implemented across the Northern Territory under the act is somehow dangerous to the future of the NLC. I think that it is concerned that, unless it is involved in the act pretty heavily as a broker or is somehow in control of the way these schemes are implemented on Aboriginal land, then its future may be under some kind of a cloud. If that is the case, then we should all address it. To my mind, the land councils were never established to become giant bureaucracies, standing between government and Aborigines, who comprise 25% of our population, in the implementation of government programs.

The Northern Land Council seems to be saying that the minister should not go out and consult extensively in an Aboriginal area on whether or not the people want this particular community government scheme. As honourable members are aware, the act provides for extensive consultation and that the minister must be assured that it is the will of the people in a particular area before they adopt the community government scheme. As a matter of fact, it is a long and painful process and that may be why not as many have come to fruition to date as we would have liked.

The land councils seems to be saying to the minister that he and his officer's cannot talk with Aboriginals and that the minister should not satisfy himself about a community's wishes because the land councils would say they are the only bodies that can judge if consultation has been extensive enough and if the people really want the community government scheme that the government is offering. The land councils want to be involved heavily and to act as go-betweens. They would like the government to accede to that role for them because it would perpetuate their existence forever and probably provide an excuse for a few more officers to be added to the ranks.

I have always seen the role of land councils as facilitating the preparation of land claims. They fulfilled that role adequately in the past by gathering the extensive information necessary to lodge a claim and process it through the courts and by advising Aboriginals on such matters as dealing with mining companies and so on. That is a role that is disputed pretty hotly these days. However, it is well over the mark for land councils to extend their charters to cover anything at all which relates to Aboriginal land. If the land councils had the power to insist that they should determine everything that happens on Aboriginal land, we would be well on the way to establishing a de facto government in the Northern Territory. The extension of that argument is that the Northern Territory government would have to bow to the land councils in all matters relating to Aboriginals and Aboriginal land. If any member of this Assembly would give credence to the argument that land councils should play that role, and that the government should not go directly to Aboriginals but should go first to the land councils, we are in for some very big trouble in the future. I commend the honourable minister for his statement.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, let me respond first to the last point made by the member for Fannie Bay. Since accusations have been levelled by the Minister for Community Development at the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I adjure the member for Fannie Bay to read certain documents. I adjure him to obtain a copy of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. I appreciate that it is Commonwealth legislation and he may find his fingers tainted by actually touching a copy but I do suggest that he do so. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy with me and cannot quote the particular section but I ...

Mr Perron: Just tell me what it says.

Mr BELL: If you would shut up for a minute, I probably would.

I undertake that, when I have finished my comments on this statement, I will leave the Chamber and find the particular section I am speaking about. I will present both the member for Fannie Bay and the Minister for Community Development with a copy of the section of the Land Rights Act that empowers the land councils and gives them a quite legitimate interest in the question of community government. I have no intention of taking an adversary position in making my contribution to this debate. I would like to commence by looking at the areas where we all agree.

One of the problems that has bedevilled this country for the last 200 years has been the degree of integration of Aboriginal people into the social, political and economic life of this country. Let me place it on record once more that I wholeheartedly support the efforts of the Northern Territory government in pursuing community government. I have some points to make and some criticisms of part of the process in respect of a particular community in my electorate, but I will come to that later. I want to stress, though, that we agree largely with the content of the minister's statement and his desire to see Aboriginal people gain more control over their own lives.

I am a little saddened that one of the great challenges to self-government in the Northern Territory and one of the main stumbling blocks in our move towards statehood is the degree of integration of Aboriginal people into the social, political and economic life of this country. I say this, having lived in the north for some time and having a great deal of loyalty to the Territory, to northern and central Australia, and to all the people who live there. I believe that I am a member of this Assembly in order to advance exactly those issues.

It is worth while placing the area where we do agree in an historical context because it is very easy to forget that, 20 years ago, there was by no means that sort of agreement within the community about integration. Many honourable members will recall the hot debates about Aboriginal affairs policy and the issue of integration versus assimilation. For the benefit of honourable members who are not well acquainted with the argot of that particular debate, let me point out that, in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, the policy of assimilation meant that schools, communities, settlements and mission stations were run on the basis that Aboriginal people would develop an entirely western orientation to life and that their total assimilation into the towns and the cities of the south would be possible. For very good reasons, we have moved to an approach of seeking - whether we call it self-determination or self-management - to provide Aboriginal people with a means of integrating with the wider community on their own terms.

In that context, let us refer to some of the hidden agendas, as it were, in this statement. The one that bothers me particularly is the attitude to the land councils. We have heard much talk in this Assembly about the move towards statehood and there has been a great deal of talk from Northern Territory ministers about the devolution of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act to the Northern Territory legislature. Given their many public statements that exaggerate and distort the relationship between Aboriginal communities and the wider Territory community, I find it a little difficult to understand how Territory government ministers can advocate the devolution of the Land Rights Act to this legislature and make these negative criticisms of the land councils. The land councils are, quite justifiably, suspicious of whatever the Northern Territory government does because of the way it has manipulated the issues of Aboriginal rights in various circumstances and for various electoral reasons.

My concern is that the minister has decided to use as a forum for head kicking what would be regarded, generally, as a positive issue. That head kicking has obscured his constructive efforts - and I give him credit for those efforts and those of many of the officers of his department. He would do well to learn to live with the operation of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act because there is not a great deal of difference between what is being put forward by the honourable minister and his department and what is being put forward by the land councils.

In passing, I should say that I appreciate the opportunity to debate this particular statement in full. I note that we still have on the Notice Paper the minister's statement on the Turner Report. Perhaps some of my comments in this debate would be more suitably made in relation to that report. I think that the practice of debating these statements in full is to be encouraged and I hope that my contribution will be seen in a constructive light.

I would be very interested to see what changes the Northern Territory government would make to the Land Rights Act if it believed that the land councils were acting ultra vires, as the member for Fannie Bay has suggested. I will be interested to find out if the honourable minister agrees with him that the land councils are acting beyond the legislative framework under which they are established. I will demonstrate to both the honourable minister and the member for Fannie Bay that that is not the case.

Mr Speaker, the honourable minister really has a problem. He cannot help himself, and I suppose it advances his cause in the eyes of backbenchers. He likes to do a bit of head kicking.

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The honourable member keeps referring to this habit of mine of head kicking. I think it is most inappropriate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable minister will have an opportunity to argue such matters later in the debate.

Mr BELL: Spending as much time as I do in Aboriginal communities and with Aboriginal people, I am pretty well proof against the criticism of paternalism. It really does not bother me, but I had hoped that this would be a constructive debate. As I say, the honourable minister cannot help himself; I hope it gets him a few votes in Cabinet or at party meetings. However, I strongly adjure him, when he is discussing these central issues of human development in the Territory in the future, to resist the temptation to kick heads whether they be opposition heads or land council heads or whatever.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I said that I would raise a couple of issues relating to my electorate. I hope that people in the honourable minister's department are listening too because the minister made frequent reference in his statement to consultation: 'we are happy to consult'. I am not quite sure why, but the process is proceeding too quickly. Let me give a clear example. On the news a few weeks ago, we heard that a community government council was to be established at Santa Teresa and that officers from the department had been out at Santa Teresa to discuss that. I went out to Santa Teresa. People listen to the radio news there and they said: 'Hang on; what's going on? We have heard nothing about this'. What had happened was that the honourable minister had issued a press statement on 23 October saying: 'A community government council is to be introduced at the Santa Teresa community, 70 km south west of Alice Springs, following a visit by Commonwealth Development Minister, Don Dale'. However, the people there did not know about it. The first they heard about this meeting and the community government scheme was on the radio. To my knowledge, that is all they have heard about it.

Mr Dale: Read the rest of the press release.

Mr BELL: To answer the honourable minister's interjection, I read the first paragraph. The journalists can incorporate whatever happens to be in it.



Mr Dale: Read the rest into Hansard.

Mr BELL: You can read it into Hansard. I will give you the copy in case you have not got one.

My point is that the consultation process had not been carried out. I am concerned that the government is going too fast. Let me make an offer to the honourable minister, in the context of this debate: just as I went out to Hermannsburg with the Chief Minister to talk about statehood, I am more than happy to go out to communities in my electorate with the honourable minister, or with officers of his department, to discuss community government.

I appreciated the invitation from the honourable minister to visit Wallace Rock Hole to attend the handing over of community government - and a wonderful day it was, Mr Deputy Speaker. I suggest to the honourable minister that, if he is interested in Aboriginal communities incorporating under the community government section of the Local Government Act, from my experience there will be tougher places than Wallace Rock Hole to be consulted about the institution of the scheme. My association with those communities may be of considerable benefit to the communities themselves, and to the Territory as a whole, in providing a suitable framework for local government which, as I have said, is a matter that we all agree about. I can see that the scheme is of great benefit to the Territory and Australia and, potentially, to the communities concerned because it will create contiguous local government areas. I accept that, and I am prepared to put in time to ensure that they are integrated into the fabric of the communities themselves.

In relation to forms of community government in Aboriginal communities, the central issue is human processes. All the law and government departments can do is provide a framework and that framework may help or hinder. Let me make it quite clear that western institutions like local government have to be mediated and communicated by white fellows. It is the human process of communication. But let us bear in mind that there are not too many first-language English speakers in these communities. It is those human processes that will enable Aboriginal people on those communities to gain control over their own lives, not the legislative framework by itself.

My final point relates to a notice which appeared in the NT Government Gazette of 17 September 1986, at page 7. I think I have drawn this to the minister's attention before. There are 4 fairly large communities in my electorate, the Atitjere community at Harts Range, the Engawala community at Alcoota, the Titjikala community at Maryvale, all of them the so-called Gibb communities, and the Mutitjulu community at Ayers Rock. I understand that there are local government funds available at Yulara, and I am very interested in the use of those funds for the benefit of all Territorians living in that vicinity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the action of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in passing to me a copy of section 23 of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, which reads:

The functions of a land council are: to ascertain and express the wishes and the opinion of Aboriginals living in the area of the land council as to the management of Aboriginal land in that area and as to appropriate legislation concerning that land; to protect the interests of traditional Aboriginal owners of, and other Aboriginals interested in, Aboriginal land in the area of the land council.

The word 'legislation' there is unqualified. I think I have made my point in that regard.

Mr Perron: It does not mean replace government.

Mr BELL: It says 'legislation' unqualified. I will get a copy of it, and pass it across to you, Marshall.

Mr McCARTHY (Primary Production): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to say that I think the statement of the Minister for Community Development is very well balanced, unlike some of the members of the opposition who said it was a regurgitation of 'old hat' material. I disagree with that. The local community government area of Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory is moving at a fast pace, and there is a need for the Territory government to update its view on that regularly and to restate its policy.

I refer to the comments of the member for Stuart about Johnny-come-latelies on this side of the Assembly in respect of Aboriginal matters. I had the benefit of the experience of 6 years on Bathurst Island during the 1960s. They were 6 years of very good experience for me, and I admit that Aboriginal affairs have come a long way since that time. However, I have not been very far away from Aboriginal affairs since then. Until 1983, I continued to be very closely associated with Aboriginal affairs and still take a very great interest as the member for a largely Aboriginal electorate.

The comment of the member for Stuart that there were 'only bones' in the minister's statement, while unfounded in the way he intended it, could be taken to give a fairly good idea of what ought to be put forward in this matter of community management for Aboriginal people. It is up to the government to provide only the framework on which the people out in the communities can work to develop their own areas of self-management. Certainly, the Aboriginal people have the initiative, and will use it, to develop community government in their communities.

As the honourable member said quite rightly, Lajamanu, in his electorate, was the first community to develop community government, and it has had a chequered history. This can occur, not because of the community government system that is in place but, in many cases, because of a lack of experience and, perhaps, a poor choice of people to administer the system within a community. That sort of thing can happen, not only in Aboriginal communities, but anywhere. In many ways, self-government and community government are related. The Northern Territory has only had self-government since 1978 and it is only since that time that the community government legislation has been put in place and that Aboriginal people have been able to take advantage of the opportunities that it provides for them to look after their own affairs.

Community government has been in existence for considerably longer than 6 months. Lajamanu has had it now for quite a number of years. Originally, it was covered by part XX of the old act and is covered now by part VIII of the new act. I believe community government will grow in much the same way that Territory self-government has grown: through experience. Aboriginal people have to learn through experience, as everybody else does. The act has given them many powers that they did not have in the past. It is enshrined in their own legislation and they can make their own rules. Communities constituted under the new act are able to lay down their own guidelines. Self-management can be achieved through other means. There is no doubt of that. But this is a very good system and I was pleased to hear that the member for MacDonnell supported that view.

The management of funds provided to Aboriginal communities is something that is in the forefront of their responsibility. The act provides, and rightly so, for some controls on the way communities use that money. There is no way we could expect to establish community government and self-management without having some controls.

In many cases, as the member for Stuart said, there are people who do not have water, power, houses, toilets and so on. That is true. There is no doubt that there are a number of people in the Territory who do not have adequate facilities. Most of those people have moved out into those areas in very recent times.

Mr Ede: Yuendumu?

Mr McCARTHY: A great deal of money has been spent over the years at Yuendumu to provide very good facilities. My last visit to Yuendumu indicated that many of the facilities were not looked after adequately. There are many places, not only in the member for Stuart's electorate but also in other electorates around the Northern Territory, where some communities are not playing their part in maintaining the services that are provided and making sure that they are kept in a reasonable state of order. I do not intend to reflect on those communities nor to indicate which ones they are but, certainly, there are communities which do not look after their facilities as well as others. There are communities that do an excellent job and, by and large, it is those communities that have taken on some form of self-management. Those communities are handling their own affairs and, as a consequence, avoid much of the frustration that they experienced when they were manipulated from outside. I would like to say more about that because manipulation does occur.

Back in the days when I was involved with the community at Bathurst Island, the community was managed by the Catholic Church. It was run by a superintendent. In those days, most communities had a superintendent who was responsible for their day-to-day management. Councils were not in place in most cases although there were some advisory bodies comprised of senior Aboriginal men and women who provided some idea about what their needs were. There was very little in the way of facilities because there was very little money. I am referring to the days when the responsibility lay with the federal government, long before the days of self-government. I can recall that, on Bathurst Island in those days, there was only 1 tap for 1000 people. Housing was mainly in the form of tin shanties and there were very few toilets.

These days, since self-government, we see a very modern community on Bathurst Island accommodating about 1300 people with facilities that any community in Australia would be proud of. That has happened over only a few years. There are many other communities which have similar facilities. Take the example of Daly River in my electorate. It is a model of self-management. It does not have community government but it manages itself and it really is a top-line community, and certainly looks after its facilities.

This government wants to get away from paternalistic management. It wants to see Aboriginal people support themselves and take responsibility for their own actions, as we do in our communities. We want to take responsibility for our actions in our communities. Aboriginal people want to take responsibility for theirs. The minister's statement is about strengthening the ability of Aboriginal people to do that. As I have said, the community government scheme provides specific regulations to suit the needs of a community. Every piece

of community government legislation suits the community for which it was established and allows for input from the local people in the establishment of their community government proposal.

There are problems in Aboriginal communities. In some cases, there is vandalism which is perpetrated by an irresponsible element in the communities. In the main, it is younger people who create damage in communities. Probably, it is brought about by a lack of things to do, frustration and tensions resulting from communication problems of a number of different groups living together in the community. Aboriginal people do not always get along well together, and recent actions at Port Keats are a reflection of that. That problem has to be addressed, but the people who should do this are the Aboriginal people, and they are able to do this under the community government legislation. It is their responsibility, first and foremost, to see that peace is kept in their communities. In many instances, the police cannot control the sort of things that happen in some communities as a result of such tensions. It is simply not possible to maintain the peace on some occasions.

Mr Ede: What about Aboriginal police aides?

Mr McCARTHY: In many cases, the police aides cannot do it either.

Mr Ede: I think they do a good job!

Mr McCARTHY: I agree but, in many cases, they are not able to confront some of the people who are involved in violence because of their own particular relationships. That happens in the area of community health too sometimes.

The land councils have a responsibility to reflect the views of the traditional owners. There is no doubt that they have that responsibility under the Land Rights Act. Unfortunately, they do not do only that. If they confined themselves to their responsibility of reflecting the views of Aboriginal communities and people for whom they have certain responsibilities relating to land, there would not be a problem with this particular government's plans for self-management in Aboriginal communities. There would be no problems whatsoever. Unfortunately, the land councils do see a problem because they have been able to wield the stick for years. They have been able to rule the roost in terms of telling people what to do.

If we talk about paternalism, we refer to the old days when there were superintendents on Bathurst Island and at other communities. I do not believe any of the churches have anything to be ashamed of in the way they managed Aboriginal communities. Given the problems that confronted them and the facilities available in those days, they did an excellent job. In fact, very few Aboriginal communities would be in the position they are now were it not for the churches. Basically, the communities that really stand out today are those that were managed originally by churches. I would be interested to hear anyone deny that view.

If any group was ever paternalistic, it is the land councils because they usurp the responsibilities of the local people. The land councils take away the people's right to make decisions about their own land. The fact that they make statements to the effect that the community government legislation could stand in the way of the Land Rights Act is ludicrous.

Mr Ede: Have you seen the functions?

Mr McCARTHY: What the hell do I care about the functions that are laid down there? They have a function to reflect the views of the Aboriginal owners on land management issues. Everybody in the Northern Territory is entitled to have local government. Should we say that the Aboriginal people should not have local government because it does not suit the land councils? Everybody is entitled to their own level of local government. If they cannot have that, because it does not fit in with the Land Rights Act, then the Land Rights Act is wrong, not the community government scheme. Where the Land Rights Act does not allow the Northern Territory to administer, through local government, to the needs of 25% of the population, the Land Rights Act is totally and absolutely wrong.

I believe that the positive attitude taken by the Minister for Community Development should be commended. I would like to think that community government will be put in place in most, if not all, Aboriginal communities. Of course, the scheme relates to a whole range of communities. Mataranka has adopted it, Batchelor and Adelaide River are considering it and Elliott - a combined Aboriginal and white community - has adopted it. This particular statement relates to the Territory government's views on Aboriginal self-management. I commend it and trust that it will have the support of all members.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition supports the community government program, and I am not the first member of the opposition to say that. Indeed, the 2 previous opposition speakers indicated their support. There are comments in the minister's statement which indicate a very innovative change to the policy on which the government has acted in the past, if not its stated policy. I am pleased to note that it is now the cornerstone of his government's policy on Aboriginal matters that the Aboriginal community represents a significant and important group in Northern Territory society.

I welcome that very innovative change of attitude because not everything that has happened to date in this Assembly has indicated that. Before Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory were asking for community government, or anything else, they were asking for land. There has not been a single land claim in the Northern Territory which has not been opposed by the Northern Territory government. An old gentleman, who is in hospital, received title to his land the other day and that is presently being challenged by the Northern Territory government. If it is now the Northern Territory government's official policy to recognise this very significant section of the Northern Territory's population and to recognise the needs and aspirations of Aboriginals, then I welcome that change. I would hope that, in the very near future, the Chief Minister will withdraw his court action against the federal government for assenting to those people's desires and aspirations. However, I doubt that that will happen.

I live in Nhulunbuy, in a community which could fairly be described as representative of the Northern Territory. It has a young, affluent, cosmopolitan, European population, which is dominant numerically, within a very large area of land which is owned by Aboriginal people who, by and large, are living in a traditional manner. I am afraid I could not speak for all those people with the degree of authority that the minister seems to be able to demonstrate on behalf of communities after a few whistle-stop tours around the Northern Territory. After living in Nhulunbuy for 16 years and spending a fair amount of my time with Aboriginal people, one thing I have learned is that they are all different people. There is no group of people there who can express the desires and needs of all Aboriginal people. I envy the Minister for Community Development who can undertake a quick swing around the Northern

Territory and, in 6 months, come up with a magic formula which will satisfy everybody. I can assure him that he has managed to achieve something in 6 months that I have not achieved in 16 years.

However, I repeat that support of the philosophy behind the introduction of community governments in Aboriginal communities. When the act was passed in this Assembly, I said that I perceived that there would be real difficulties in convincing landowners that they should hand over title to their land to a community in order that a community government could be established. It needs to be remembered that the traditional owners of Aboriginal land hold that land in trust. That is a concept that, possibly, you and I cannot understand, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is not a commodity to be traded; it is not a commodity that can disappear. As far as Aboriginal people are concerned, that land is held in trust for that family forever. For an Aboriginal traditional owner to be convinced that he should hand over his land to a bureaucratic structure, which is basically what a community government is, will be extremely difficult. There is no easy way around it. It is not going to be easy and I said that when the bill was introduced and passed.

However, to say that the Northern Land Council or the Central Land Council is behaving irresponsibly by representing the very people it is obliged to represent under the act - the traditional owners and Aboriginal people with a traditional attachment to their land - is arrant nonsense. That is precisely why the land councils exist: to represent the people with traditional attachment to the land. I appreciate that there are potential conflicts of interest in Aboriginal communities which may be made up of people from very far flung places. For example, Yirrkala, which is in my electorate, is the largest Aboriginal community. It is made up of people who come from many parts of Arnhem Land. Yirrkala is not necessarily their traditional homeland. The minister is suggesting to the traditional owner and the people who have traditional responsibilities for that land, that they should hand over their land to a community government and allow it to control their community area.

Mr Perron: Local government does not own all the land. Darwin City Council does not own all the land in Darwin.

Mr LEO: If a community government is to have some degree of authority to collect charges and to administer matters within its precinct, it must have some control over it. I appreciate that it does not have to own it, but it must have some authority over it. What the minister is saying is that a traditional owner must transfer his authority because that is what land represents to Aboriginals.

Mr Dale: He can be elected to the council.

Mr LEO: It is not always the case that the traditional owners of land and other people associated with a particular piece of land are necessarily in a numerically dominant position. I am fairly sure that it is not the case at Yirrkala. There are people living at Yirrkala who come from many other places, from down at Blue Mud Bay, from western Arnhem Land, and so on. It is not necessarily the case that the traditional owner will maintain authority over his land and, if a traditional owner loses authority over his land, he may as well have sold it. You have to understand that, for Aboriginal people, land is not a commodity. If an Aboriginal person loses authority over even be a very small piece of land, he may as well have sold it or given it away. That was always a difficulty with the community government legislation and I have pointed it out previously. To blame the land councils for pursuing the case of the people who have responsibility for land goes nowhere near

addressing the problem. I admit that it is a problem, but do not blame the land councils for doing the job that they have to.

Other parts of the minister's statement have been responded to adequately by members of the opposition. I wish the scheme well but, if the government is going to take the attitude that the scheme can be made to succeed simply by confronting people who have legitimate roles to play - the traditional owners, the land councils and the community members - then I can assure it that it will not, and I will have no part to play in it. It is doomed to failure unless the entire matter is approached in a cooperative manner. Mere words in statements made in this Assembly will not accomplish it. Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land will be convinced only by this government's attitude. While I am sure that they are prepared to be persuaded about a minister's attitude, they need to be certain about this government's attitude, and the continuous barrage of legal action and threats of legal action is doing nothing to inspire them with confidence in this government.

The attitude of the federal member for the Northern Territory to Aboriginal culture and aspirations is to call the Aboriginal people a collection of child-bashing, lizard chasers. How can they be inspired with any degree of confidence in this government if that is the type of attitude they are confronted with day after day, year after year? In terms of winning their confidence, this government is a million miles behind, simply because of what has been said about Aboriginal people and done to them over many years of self-government. Whilst I applaud the minister's efforts, I am afraid that this government's act will have to be cleaned up considerably before the Aboriginal people, certainly those where I come from, will be inspired with any degree of confidence.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, it took me some time to ascertain whether the members of the opposition were speaking in support of this statement or against it. It was not until the last speaker, the member for Nhulunbuy, mentioned at the beginning of his speech that he supports it, that I realised exactly what their position is. However, he then proceeded to spend 15 minutes telling us all the reasons why community government was not a good move. The previous 2 speakers from the opposition benches had spent 40 minutes of our time telling us exactly the same thing, yet they assured us that they support the statement. I am a little mystified.

I applaud the statement. I believe that at long last we have recognised that the way to success in the conduct of Aboriginal communities is to implement a system of self-management through the establishment of Aboriginal community councils. The time has come to do away forever with the policy which has been in place for years and in which the opposition apparently continues to believe. I refer to the attitude of paternalism, of patronage and fatherly intervention by government, land councils and bureaucrats.

With the introduction of community government, Aboriginal communities will be able to identify their own needs. The policy is one of self-management. It will provide the opportunity for Aboriginal communities to identify their own needs, set their own goals and work towards achieving these, while maintaining their cultural and social values. The policy of the past has resulted in Aboriginals losing their identity and therefore their dignity. This has come about through a combination of factors, 2 of which have proved very damaging - the paternalistic attitude of government, and substance abuse. The new, innovative policy of self-management announced by the minister today will give all communities who wish to participate the opportunity to regain that lost dignity. Gone will be the days when they were directed and advised

at every turn by the government and others. They can now set their own priorities for their own communities.

However, with this transition to self-government comes the responsibility of organising their council affairs and the way they handle their funds in a meaningful and professional manner. The 2 must go together. I believe this policy can be implemented very successfully because, apart from the positive results flowing from the many communities that have accepted the concept of community councils, the Department of Community Development will continue to offer support and guidance as required. It will not be a case of passing over the responsibilities and saying: 'You are on your own now; away you go'. The department and its consultants will be available to provide the back-up and training development programs necessary to implement the changeover smoothly.

In future, instead of a number of government departments interacting and, in some cases, competing on Aboriginal communities, the responsibility will be passed to the Department of Community Development. That department will allocate all funds to the community councils for the provision of essential services. Independent consultants will be employed to work with the communities and to identify and provide for the needs of individual councils which, of course, tend to vary from community to community.

However, it is the government's policy to train local people in the skills necessary to maintain essential services in their particular communities. This program will create employment opportunities and, in time, provide a pool of Aboriginal tradespeople who can effect repairs to malfunctioning essential services instead of having to wait hours, if not days, for somebody to travel out from one of the major towns to effect those repairs, which is a very expensive and time-consuming exercise.

Professor David Turner was commissioned to research and report on Aboriginal development in the Northern Territory, and his report was tabled in the Assembly earlier this year. Professor Turner conducted his research at a number of communities throughout the Territory and was able to identify some interesting and, indeed, valuable aspects of Aboriginal culture. Unfortunately, although valuable, Professor Turner's research was limited in that he visited only a small number of communities.

Professor Turner's report indicated that social structures and customs vary from community to community depending on the skin groups of the people who reside there. The matter is further complicated where people of different skin groups live together in 1 community. This has not resulted from a traditional or voluntary coming together of the tribes, but from a forced migration to European-style communities as the result of the policies of Commonwealth governments of an earlier time. If we are to understand fully and be in a position to address the needs of Aboriginal communities, then we must be aware of the social structure of all Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. Although it contributed a great deal, I believe that Professor Turner's report is limited in scope because of the relatively few communities he studied. I believe we should commission a further report, covering all communities, which would provide invaluable information for the future regarding Aboriginal communities and the culture relating to each region.

The only concern I have with this project is the position of the land councils and the role they see themselves playing. Until now, they have been as guilty of paternalism as has the bureaucracy. If they are truly committed to improving the welfare of communities, then they have an obligation to put



their weight behind this move and support the government's initiative. I suspect, however, that they will see it as a move to erode their control of Aboriginal communities and therefore they will oppose it. If this is the case, then let me advise them that they do not have a role to play as a fourth tier of government. I support the minister's statement.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, there has been some criticism of those much-used words 'paternalism' and 'patronage'. From reading the minister's statement it is very obvious that he is guilty, substantially, of the same thing himself. I welcome the honourable minister's latter-day interest and involvement in his recently-acquired portfolio and in the operation of Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. However, I share the resentment experienced by other honourable members of this Assembly at being lectured and patronised by the honourable minister as a result of a whistle-stop tour he made this year of a number of Aboriginal communities. What I am talking about can be found on page 8 of the statement, where he talks down to the reader: '... this holds true for land councils, opposition members, Commonwealth ministers or any other group or agency involved in Aboriginal affairs'.

Mr Dale: What about the whistle-stop visit the other day by Holding?

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, this is the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, not the federal parliament, and we are talking about the responsibilities of a Northern Territory minister. What Mr Holding does or does not do, in terms of exercising the responsibilities he has to Aboriginal people across the entire continent of Australia, is hardly relevant.

However, it is amusing to hear this latter-day conversion of the Northern Territory government - and I welcome it - to the concept of Aboriginal self-management being run in here as if it were some remarkable road-to-Damascus idea that occurred only to the government and had not existed before today. What nonsense it is to suggest that.

I was resident for many years in an Aboriginal community that operated under the old welfare system at the time when the official policy of self-determination was introduced by the Whitlam government. In those days, as I am sure the minister is aware, the hierarchy of the power structure in those communities culminated in the superintendent who had absolute power, almost like the captain of a ship, over the lives of every black or white resident of the community. The lifestyle of those communities was dictated almost entirely by the personality and attitudes of individual superintendents. Some of them were very good and some of them were extremely bad.

If the superintendent disapproved of something, he did not have to prove his case before acting. He could classify anything as misbehaviour, even something as simple as a late night party or cohabitation. I remember one occasion when a European member of staff was called into the superintendent's office and informed that his permit had been revoked under the powers that the superintendent indisputably had, and he should pack his bags and leave on the next plane out. That is exactly how those places were run.

I do not think any of us would dispute that a dictatorship is the most effective form of government, provided it is a benevolent dictatorship and that each of us, individually, could be the dictator. In some communities the system worked extremely well and to the benefit of everyone. Some exceptional personalities did exist, people who had no vested interests, who lived - as I

remember one did - almost like a judge of the High Court or a hermit. Such people lived very lonely lives. They could not afford to go down to the local teacher's house or the local forestry worker's house because the politics of those small communities were vicious - and they still are, I might add. This is not only a phenomenon in isolated Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, but in any small community. If the superintendent did that, he would immediately be labelled as a friend of the Progress Association employees and no one else. These characters - and some of the better ones were characters - used to live lives of almost hermit-like seclusion. They would not even go somewhere for Christmas dinner for fear that their power would be seen to be arbitrary because of forming friendships with particular groups in the community. They led an extraordinary existence in those days.

In the 1970s, after the election of the Labor government, the policy of self-determination was introduced officially. I can still remember the official definition of the word 'self-determination'. It said that self-determination meant the 'ability of Aboriginal people to determine their own lifestyle and development and the pace of that development within the broader social, economic and political framework of the wider Australian community'. I do not think that a better definition for self-determination has yet been produced.

The problem was that the reference to the wider Australian community was largely forgotten for many years. Some extraordinary experiments were tried in which the wider Australian social, economic and political framework was forgotten. Unfortunately, on a number of profoundly disturbing occasions, a great lack of responsibility was exercised and Aboriginal community councils were given quite extraordinary freedoms that normal councils would never possess in terms of accountability for money and so on. Through absolutely no fault of the Aboriginal councils themselves, but through appalling administration, some truly embarrassing incidents occurred. It is unfortunate that that happened because, if the definition of 'self-determination' had been implemented to its full extent, considerably more progress would have been made in a far shorter time. That would have been the case if the newly-introduced councils had been told from day 1 that responsibility and professionalism in the exercise of the responsibilities, which had been dropped on them literally overnight, was part of the deal. That did not happen. As a result of that, the policy of self-determination came in for some quite unwarranted criticism.

My support for the framework of the scheme, which the minister's statement enunciates, is based on the fact that it reflects very largely the principles that were enunciated in that original policy shift to self-determination. When the policy was implemented, literally overnight, in the manner of the Whitlam government as it sprinted to the tape before being thrown out at the election, there was an enormous amount of resentment which militated against the success of the scheme. I remember that when the name 'superintendent' was abolished and replaced with the title 'community adviser', a number of superintendents made a mute protest by leaving the name 'superintendent' on their doors for many years after the event. It was not simply on their doors, but in their minds as well. They did not leave the name there accidentally. It was left consciously and deliberately to emphasise their mute protest at what they saw as rapid change. I can remember having a number of quite bitter arguments over the years, particularly with mission staff, about what they saw as the great damage the federal Labor government had done in introducing self-determination. They felt that the old superintendent system should have been perpetuated for a much longer period of time.

As I grow older in experience in the Northern Territory, it is interesting to reminisce about the extraordinarily rapid shifts in government policy and legislation which Aboriginal communities have had to cope with over the last 10 years. I must say that the ability of Aboriginal communities to cope with the imposition of bewildering new measures has been nothing short of remarkable. They have had the liquor laws, many of which are extremely beneficial to Aboriginal communities, the new mining regime, the implementation of land councils and a bewildering parade of other legislative and social developments. There is much to be commended in the framework that has now been set up for community government. By and large, the Aboriginal communities within my own electorate that have had detailed discussions are supportive of the way in which it is being implemented. Underlying that support is the perennial concern about an overall lack of necessary funding. That is not a feature in itself of the changes. In terms of the philosophical direction behind the changes, I think it is true to say that the scheme is largely supported by the communities in my electorate.

The member for Fannie Bay made his usual sparkling contribution to this debate. He is a good contributor to debates of this nature. We can always depend on getting the authoritarian line from him and the contribution of the Minister for Community Development pales into insignificance beside it. I can clearly envisage the honourable member for Fannie Bay breaking the arms of fish if they do not eat their bread.

The honourable member said that land councils could constitute de facto governments of the Northern Territory. I believe that that is a greatly exaggerated claim. Section 23 of the Land Rights Act lays out the responsibilities that the land councils have. I mention the land councils because they came in for considerable comment in the minister's statement. On half a dozen occasions, they were singled out for criticism. One of the problems with the minister's grasp of this subject, which I think he has now got on top of, was his initial complete misunderstanding and subsequent misinterpretation of the Turner Report in respect of its attitude to land rights. That is a matter of public record because the honourable minister issued press statements saying that the Turner Report was a remarkable innovation in that it would provide a much better tenure over land than was provided by the current Land Rights Act. We debated that statement in here at some length.

Mr Dale: Did you make that point in the debate?

Mr B. COLLINS: Indeed I did, Mr Speaker. Even though the land councils certainly would not agree with me, I said that it was my personal belief that the Turner Report was an excellent report. One section that I commended particularly was the section that deals with land rights. In my view, it is a well-researched, sensitive and knowledgeable exposition of land rights.

Mr Ede: That is a personal view.

Mr B. COLLINS: That is correct. I have no hesitation in stressing that there are differences of opinion between myself and my colleagues and the land councils on that. I have no hesitation in saying that, substantially, I agree with most of what Turner said about land rights. Of course, he made the point very strongly indeed that his self-government proposals did not in any way interfere with or cut across the basic support that he gave very strongly to the system of ownership of land that currently exists in the Northern Territory.

Like all of us in this changing society - governments, trade unions and politicians - I believe that the land councils will have to adjust further to varying circumstances. The land councils will need to appreciate that this is not a static but a dynamic society and that they will have to live with changing systems of government within Aboriginal communities. I believe that the prime responsibility of the land councils, and I have always said this, is to work on behalf of the landowners within the land claim procedures and, more importantly, with land management on behalf of Aboriginal owners after claims have been granted.

I do not see that the land councils have any legitimate role to play today in the internal political structures of a community in terms of local government. Their role should be restricted and it is a most important role. I would think that they would have a pretty full slate in concerning themselves with the management of the land resource itself and, through regionalised operations such as the Gagadju Association and the Kunjinku Association that act under the umbrella of the land councils, simply use it as a resource where the principal decision-making is taken by the landowners themselves in that area.

Mr Perron: We agree on 2 things, Bob.

Mr B. COLLINS: We do indeed. Turner made that very point and I agree with the points that he made.

One of the points at issue in my own electorate with the operations of the land councils - and this is no fault of the land councils themselves - is that, through the very structure of the land councils, people are making decisions in respect of land owned by Aboriginal owners who are not in any way, tribally or otherwise, connected with that land. I believe that, for the future viability and success of the land councils - and it is something they largely recognise themselves - because of the regionalisation process that has been occurring, the only effective way of charting their course in future is to continue to regionalise and localise their operations.

On page 8 of his statement, the honourable minister says that 'you do not pick up this degree of sensitivity by sitting in your office developing grand ideas or defending so-called noble positions'. One would have thought from the proceedings of the last 24 hours that the word 'sensitivity' and the minister would be mutually exclusive. I am very pleased to see that they are not and perhaps, in his own personal development, the minister will come as far along the road as the honourable member for Fannie Bay obviously has.

The minister recognises, and I agree with his position on this, that 'land councils have an important role and function to play in representing traditional owners in land matters and the government fully recognises and supports this'. I wish to place on the record my commendation for the cohesive, global approach that the Department of Community Development is adopting in relation to the implementation of the management of Aboriginal communities. I want to comment on this because I think it an important logistical development that is worthy of support. In the past, the development of an Aboriginal or isolated community in the Northern Territory has been largely a matter of departmentalisation in that the Department of Education did its thing and the Department of Transport and Works did its thing, and so on. Each department worked independently of the others. Under the umbrella of the Department of Community Development the new approach is to develop a cohesive plan for the whole community. That is a highly commendable approach.

I wish to hand a last bouquet to the Minister for Community Development because I think it is important for me to place this on the public record. I quote from page 3 of his statement: '... the position for the option of a community government association equal to the local government association'. I support the honourable minister's initiative in this. I refute the criticisms made by the federal member for the Northern Territory - and I think they were made in complete ignorance and without checking the facts or even liaising with his own colleague - that this will set up a massive bureaucracy. It is a commendable recognition of the fact that, if they did not have their own association in the early stages of the implementation of this new scheme, inevitably they would be totally overwhelmed by the size and the organisation of the larger body. I commend the minister for this. As an observer of the political scene, I was interested to note from the minister's statement that the honourable federal member probably had not caught up with the scheme even though letters had been sent to him.

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

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I would like to reiterate what other members of the opposition have said already in respect of their support of the statement. It is my view that many people in my community are very pleased about the implementation of various programs by Department of Community Development officers and the minister in relation to securing more jobs and providing funds for communities such as Angurugu. I believe Galiwinku is examining the option of developing a community government council.

I know personally 2 people who have taken part in a course with the Department of Community Development and the Department of the Chief Minister in conjunction with the Public Service Board. These people have recently gained some sort of recognition as a result of the training that the Northern Territory government is offering. Recently, they have taken up positions with the Arnhem Land Progress Association and this is a major step up for them.

As I said, there are members in the opposition who support what the government is doing, but I wish to express some concern in relation to some statements made by honourable members and the minister. For example, Angurugu is a community made up of a number of tribes who have been living on that island for some time. Because of the composition of that community, there would never be the difficulty in implementing such a program as this initiative of the Northern Territory government there that would be experienced, say, at Elcho Island. Whilst it is also an island, Elcho has many tribes living around it and about 19 clans live on the island itself. Each of these has specific lands that it refers to as its home.

My concern is that, because a community has been left there since the old mission days, the councils have taken responsibility for some of the programs and, generally, for the running of that community. Over a period of time, people have emerged in that community who have shown an ability to speak in this English language and to respond to the needs and the initiatives of the government. As a result, they are seen as leaders in that community. It becomes forgotten then that there is a landowner who has responsibility to that specific land whether it is leased or otherwise. That person has specific traditional, spiritual and ceremonial rights. The minister and the department should take this into account in the consultation process when seeking to implement such a diverse policy. It would be unfair to omit these people from the process of consultation.

Those people have a responsibility to look after their interest in their land. As honourable members would be aware, most communities that were given land under schedule 1 of the Land Rights Act recognise the basic rights and the basic traditional affiliations of those people to their land. That is an important factor even when looking at a policy which may be of benefit to that community, and a considerable number of people live in that community. We should not forget the interests and aspirations of the traditional landowners. There may be only 1 or 2 but, in the spirit, the land belongs to each traditional owner. Whether it is agreed to join the community government scheme or whatever, that land still belongs to the traditional owners.

The minister mentioned that there is cooperation between some members of the community and traditional landowners. Certainly there is, and there are also some conflicts. Milingimbi is a classic example and I believe the honourable minister is well aware of it. The landowners and the council are not cooperating with each other. They have been arguing for some time to determine which organisation or community group should be responsible for governing that area. I believe that is a factor that the government has to take into account.

In respect of some of the criticisms levelled at the Northern Land Council, I believe they were made through the personal ignorance of honourable members about the functions of the land councils. Like the government, they are there to do a specific job under federal legislation - which is European legislation anyway and alien to the people there. The land councils have a hard job to do. When legislators like those who have spoken here today say the sorts of things that they have said, it does nothing to stimulate a good relationship with an organisation such as the Northern Land Council, which itself is a political beast. In my electorate, many Aboriginal people look to the Northern Land Council for the protection of their land, the management of their areas or the development that they want.

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak on this statement as it affects 25% of the people of the Northern Territory that otherwise have not had the chance to be able to develop themselves over a period of time. However, another concern that I have is the way in which the policy is to be implemented in the communities. A story I hear in the communities that I represent is that departmental officers have been sent there with the political purpose of talking to the Aboriginal people so that they forget that they have another option: the Associations Incorporation Act. Recently, I heard rumours that officers of the department have been saying to people out there that, if they accept this, funding will increase by a big margin but, if they do not, they will not receive anything under the next capital works program or whatever. Those sorts of concerns have been have expressed to me and I would appreciate the minister explaining if that is the policy that this government has in respect of the implementation of the proposal he announced this morning.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank honourable members of the opposition for their response to this statement. I must say that this is one debate in which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition made no ground at all. He failed to enhance his position, first, as deputy and, secondly, as a representative of Aboriginal communities. Quite frankly, his performance was pathetic. However, I thank the opposition backbenchers, the members for Arafura, Arnhem and MacDonnell. In a very realistic way, they lent their support to a policy that I believe gives the Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory a direction for the future and something to aim for as far as their development is concerned.

I said in my statement: 'The changes that we as a government have implemented have been far-reaching and, let me say, not without some discomfort to some people'. There is no doubt that there will continue to be discomfort from such a far-reaching innovation as the community government scheme, but that does not mean that it will not work for a large number of Aboriginal people in the short term and, hopefully, in the not too distant future, for most of the Aboriginal people, if not all.

Mr Speaker, let me clarify another matter. It seems to me that members of the opposition have an obsession with the idea that I am trying, in some way, to claim some credit for this particular legislation. I am not. This policy has been developed by the Northern Territory government since self-government. From my time as Deputy Lord Mayor on the Darwin City Council, I can remember sifting through ream after ream of paper getting the Local Government Act together. I am sure the member for Ludmilla recalls those days and nights when we sat around for hour upon hour going through successive draft copies of what is now the best Local Government Act in Australia.

As I said earlier today, I do not profess to be a knight in shining armour who has come along to change the ways of all Aboriginal people, and to be their saviour. That is not so at all. I was made a minister of this Northern Territory government a little while ago, and I was given responsibility for Aboriginal affairs and for local government. I take that commitment seriously. Quite frankly, I take it with a great deal of pride, and it was with that pride that I had the pleasure of introducing the Grants Commission legislation that relates to the Local Government Act. I have had a great deal to do with this, including travelling around to the communities to support the incredible work that has been done by the officers of the Department of Community Development, in some cases under a great deal of difficulty. They have been consulting with communities for months now and have been doing so in a very efficient way.

The member for MacDonnell referred to a press statement that I issued concerning the Santa Teresa community. If I recall correctly, he said that the government had not consulted with that community. He read the first paragraph of that statement, but let me read the whole of it, Mr Speaker:

A community government council is to be introduced at the Santa Teresa community 70 km south west of Alice Springs following a visit by Community Development Minister, Don Dale. Mr Dale said discussions had now taken place between the head of the Catholic Mission, Father Brian Healy, and the Secretary of the Department of Community Development, Mr Alan Scott, and a formal request for the community government scheme had been received. He said the continued support of the Catholic Mission would be a vital component in the success of the Santa Teresa scheme.

The Catholic Mission, in addition to its spiritual role, has provided government-subsidised education and health services to the community for many years. Its success in sporting and commercial areas, such as the provision of a full-size pool and community store, is well known. The government has provided funding for municipal-type services such as power, water, sewerage and town planning at Santa Teresa, he said.

In discussions this week, Father Healy said the church was willing to hand over each of its services and activities as the community became ready to accept the responsibility. The church had already offered

full control over the community store, including an unconditional transfer of fixed assets. The church's position was to move the emphasis from mission to parish activity. This move was being followed in a number of communities such as Daly River and Nguiu. The church would continue to play an active role in providing education services. It fully supported the introduction of community government as a logical step towards effective self-management.

The church should know.

Mr Dale welcomed the continued involvement of the church and recognised the valuable contribution it would make to the future well-being of Santa Teresa. Consultations between the NT government and Santa Teresa community representatives would continue to ensure a clear understanding of the advantages of community government. A draft community government constitution will be presented for consideration at Santa Teresa this week.

For the information of honourable members, it is anticipated that Santa Teresa will have taken up community government before the end of December this year.

That is yet another example of the patronising attitude of members opposite. They go out to these communities and really do not want to hear what is going on in practical terms. That is why I have made this statement in the Assembly today. I am calling on them to assist with the implementation of these policies, which the majority of opposition members agree are significant and innovative and which will have a considerable impact on the future development of Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. That was the purpose of my statement.

Let me read out the list of local government councils to date. Firstly, we have the municipal councils: Darwin City Council was established in 1957, Alice Springs Town Council in 1971, Katherine Town Council in 1978, Tennant Creek Town Council in 1978, Palmerston Town Council in 1985 and Litchfield Shire Council in 1986. The community government councils are: Lajamanu, which was established in 1980, Angurugu in 1982, Milikapiti in 1983, Pularumpi in 1984, Mataranka in 1985 and Elliott District in 1985. Places which are expected to become community governments by the end of this year are Barunga, Yuendumu, Pine Creek, Santa Teresa and Nguiu. Recently, Wallace Rock Hole attained community government status and, to illustrate the degree of consultation which takes place, its constitution was drafted 9 times before it was finally agreed upon. Communities for which draft schemes have been discussed and are well advanced are Ali Curung, Belyuen, Borroloola and Dagaragu. Preliminary discussions have been held at Hermannsburg - where, once again, the member for MacDonnell stated that there had been no discussions - and at Batchelor, Ngukurr, Kintore, Docker River and Numbulwar. In recent times, expressions of interest have been received from Galiwinku, Ramingining, Ti Tree and Daly River.

I want to read very quickly into Hansard the categories for declaration as local government bodies pursuant to section 19 of the Local Government (Grants Commission) Act and section 3 of the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act, because there does seem to be some confusion in the minds of a number of members of the opposition. I quote:

The following categories are those which will be included in the declaration pursuant to section 19 of the Local Government (Grants



Commission) Act and on the making of recommendations to the Commonwealth minister pursuant to the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act.

1. Those bodies incorporated pursuant to the Northern Territory's Associations Incorporation Act which carry out a range of community management and local government services in the community, which are eligible to apply for community government and which fall within 1 of the categories which follow:
  - (a) those bodies which operate within areas where residents have applied for and are negotiating the introduction of a community government scheme pursuant to part VIII of the Local Government Act;
  - (b) those bodies which receive current funding in respect of the 1985-86 financial year and the Town Management and Public Utilities Fund administered by the Department of Community Development. This category will not be eligible for declaration after 30 June 1988; and
  - (c) those bodies which receive special purpose grants and grants-in-aid in the 1985-86 financial year from the Department of Community Development. This category will not be eligible for declaration after 30 June 1988.
2. Those bodies created by or established under a statute, other than the Local Government Act, which control or manage a town or area in a manner similar to that of a municipal or community government council.
3. Those bodies which:
  - (a) make services available to a population which exceeds 100 on 30 June in the preceding year;
  - (b) are, in the opinion of the Secretary of the Department of Community Development, capable of carrying out community management and community government functions on a continuing basis; and
  - (c) are willing to carry out community management and community government functions on a continuing basis. This category will not be eligible after 30 June 1990.

I mentioned my concern about the land councils. That resulted from one of the white advisers meeting me at the airport in Alice Springs when I went down for the Masters Games. He made some comment about funding to homelands and did not like the reply I gave him. He then spoke to me about the land council down there and the powers of the Land Rights Act.

Recently I received a telex from the Northern Land Council that discussed local government and the role that perhaps it can take. A couple of paragraphs caused me some concern:

The Northern Land Council has had the legal opinion from leading counsel to the effect that there are major inconsistencies between the 2 acts which could render the Local Government Act void to the

extent of its application to Aboriginal land as these inconsistencies render it incapable of operating concurrently with the Land Rights Act.

The major area of inconsistency is that the Northern Territory law seeks to substitute its own scheme of land management for the Land Rights Act scheme of land ownership and management. The functions and powers given to a community government council under sections 270 and 272 of the Local Government Act, if applied to a council operating over Aboriginal land, would be inconsistent with powers held by the land trusts, the land councils and traditional owners under the Land Rights Act. In such a situation the Commonwealth law prevails.

Mr Speaker, that certainly concerns me because, knowing the attitude that has been adopted by the land councils in my time in government in the Northern Territory, I take that on board as some sort of a threat to the community government scheme. The community government legislation does not relate to land ownership. The area that is covered by any particular council could take in several borders. One of my concerns is that if, for example, a land council does not like the allocation of funds by the Grants Commission to a particular community or perhaps feels that a homeland that is not big enough to come under the scheme should be funded, the Land Rights Act would be the whip that it would use.

That is the type of thing that causes me great concern. As I said in my statement, if that is to be the attitude of any of the land councils, then I am willing to see them in court to settle the matter because I believe that they are incorrect in the advice that they have taken. However, I am very willing indeed to consult with the land councils and have them briefed by the staff of my department on what community government is all about so they need have no fears about their traditional role under the Land Rights Act. It has nothing to do with the role of people involved in community government.

I cannot take on board some of the criticisms that have been levelled at the statement in general because of the lateness of the hour. They are on the record. Our record in implementing this particular legislation to date, and I speak mainly of the officers of my department, has been commendable. I believe the attitude of Aboriginal people on the ground has been commendable and that gives me great faith in the implementation of this unique legislation which is being looked at by Aboriginal Affairs ministers from all around Australia as a model for them to follow.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER  
Ombudsman's Report 1985-86

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I table the report of the Ombudsman of the Northern Territory for 1985-86. I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION  
Report of the Distribution Committee

Continued from 11 November 1986.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by adding at the end:

But this Assembly is of the opinion that certain of the names proposed for the electoral divisions should be varied as follows -

(A) that the proposed Division of Katherine be named Elsey; and

(B) that the proposed Division of Ludmilla be named Hudson,

and that this Assembly requests His Honour the Administrator to declare the names of these Electoral Divisions accordingly.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I support the amendment. The Distribution Committee spent considerable time taking evidence from both major political parties and has spoken to individual members of this Assembly. It examined all the proposals in respect of the divisions and the numbers of persons within those divisions. I find that committee has done its work extremely well and I commend it for that. However, I would like to address the proposal for the name change from Ludmilla to Hudson.

Arguments were put to the committee about the inappropriateness of the names of some divisions. The committee considered those arguments and debated whether it should make any changes at this time. In relation to electorate names in urban Darwin, the report recommends that a total view be sought at any future redistribution. That is probably fair in respect of a large proportion of the divisions but, in the case of Ludmilla, I believe that the change is appropriate at this time.

Having represented Ludmilla with the boundaries delineated at the last redistribution some 3 years ago, I have become aware that it has been extremely difficult for my electorate to identify itself with the name of the suburb which happened to be at the centre of the electorate. Originally, the electorate was somewhat larger and the name was probably even more inappropriate at that time. With the redistribution and the boundaries proposed for my electorate, in no shape or form does the name Ludmilla reflect the makeup of this division. I will take a few moments to run through some of the areas within the electorate and the problem constituents will have in identifying with that name.

Mr Smith: You won't have to worry about it. Graeme Lewis will be representing it.

Mr FIRMIN: I will be worried about it.

At the northern end of my electorate, some parts of Coconut Grove are still within the division. I have part of the suburban confine known as Ludmilla. At the upper end, I still have a very small proportion of the area of the electorate which is considered to be Parap. The division has the industrial area of Bishop Street, the Narrows, the Bombing Road area of Winnellie and the RAAF base. It covers the Marrara Christian School at the north-eastern boundary, the German Club and parts of McMillans Road in the eastern sector. It also covers the Coonawarra Naval Base, parts of the Berrimah area, including the Berrimah Road junction, the East Arm leprosarium area, the Trade Development Zone and parts of the Hudson Creek area.

Mr Hatton: There are not many voters out there.

Mr FIRMIN: That may be so but the industrial people wish to be represented as much as others within the electorate. They like to identify with the electorate and that is very difficult if the name does not have any major bearing on the area.

I am aware that the opposition does not take the same view as myself in respect of the necessity for a change of electorate names. I would like to touch on the requirements within the Electoral Act in that respect. The Electoral Act lays down guidelines in respect of redistribution, all of which have certainly been met by the Electorate Distribution Committee. The one point that the act remains entirely silent on is the naming of electorates. There is no direction whatsoever within the act that the distribution committee must address itself to the names of divisions. In fact, I am led to believe that, when the distribution committee first met and set the original boundaries, no electorate names were put forward at all on the assumption, which I agree with, that these were a matter for executive decision. I am also led to believe that the executive subsequently felt, as a matter of convenience, that it might just as well ask the committee to name the divisions, which it did. The electorates were named conveniently after existing suburbs. The opposition will probably take up the point that was made then, that there should be wide community involvement in the naming of divisions. That did not occur when names were first allocated and, whilst I agree with the principle, I do not think a great range of names need be put forward.

One might ask why I have chosen the name Hudson. I asked a considerable number of local historians with knowledge of the area to propose names that might be applicable to events, places or persons within the proposed electorate boundaries. I was given 9 names. Some of them were partly appropriate but, in my view, not particularly so. One name stood out as being very representative of a historic fact. It was put to me by Mr Peter Forrest, a local historian who is probably known to members rather well. His suggestion of the name Hudson arose from a decoration for gallantry in the field of battle in respect of the raids over Darwin in 1942.

Wilbert Thomas Hudson was a gunner. He was with the Australian Military Forces in the 2nd Anti-aircraft Battery at Berrimah. It was actually positioned on this side of the Berrimah crossroads, towards the end of the existing airport runway. On 19 February 1942, he used a Lewis machine-gun with great skill and effect. He was almost certainly responsible for shooting down a Japanese Zero aircraft which was the first effective Australian resistance to an enemy attack on Australian soil. His anti-aircraft post was exposed and without adequate protection. Without regard to his personal safety, he carried his gun out into the open and, until his ammunition was spent, he brought to bear effective fire on low-flying enemy aircraft. For this action he was awarded the Military Medal. Those members familiar with decorations know that it is the highest award, other than the Victoria Cross, for a non-commissioned person in the military. That decoration earned him a place in history because he was the first Australian serviceman to be decorated in action on Australian soil.

It was also suggested to me that the name Hudson had another local connection. On 19 February 1942, when Gunner Hudson was using his Lewis gun against the Zeros, 17 Hudson aircraft and 14 Wirraways were attempting to defend Darwin. The Hudson squadrons, No 2 and No 13, fought gallantly throughout this theatre of war. They were involved in the strategic retreat from Ambon, where they had been fighting for a considerable period of time, and reformed in Darwin just before the 1942 raids. They made sorties out of

Darwin over and around the nearby waters, on surveillance on maritime duties and on attacks into the Indonesian island areas and further north, for nearly 12 months.

I will give an indication of just how busy these fellows were in the Hudsons, and the sort of work that they were doing. From the time that they were in operation in late 1941 until mid-1942, when they moved further north into the island group, the pilots and crews of No 2 and No 13 squadrons gained 14 DFCs, 8 DFMs, 2 OBEs and 1 BEM. They showed considerable bravery and, to my mind, they give an added dimension of significance to the name of Hudson.

As I said earlier, I believe that, whilst the act remains silent in relation to the naming of electorates, there is no impediment to this Assembly not only debating whether an electorate division name should be changed, but actually determining a new name for a division.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, first I want to address some comments to the actual redistribution and then I will speak to the amendments.

I think anyone who had anything to do with this redistribution and the previous redistribution realises that it is a very difficult task indeed. Unfortunately, the boundaries did not work out in any easy manner and the requirement to come up with sensible boundaries demanded considerable juggling. What we found, and I am sure that the Distribution Committee members and the CLP found also, was that, when a switch was made in one particular area, the ramifications of that change flowed through 5 or 6 other electorates.

I sympathise with the committee in the difficult job it had to do. Of course, it was not helped by the fact that there are a number of growth areas in the Northern Territory, particularly Palmerston and Katherine. Alice Springs is also alleged to be enjoying rapid population growth that was not really reflected in the electoral rolls. That still puzzles me, and I hope the habitation review clarifies that. In the by-election for Araluen, where one thought a significant increase would be revealed in the Araluen roll, that did not happen. I am not sure whether there are numerous phantoms in Alice Springs, that the honourable member for Sadadeen and others claim as members of the population, or whether there are dozens of footloose-and-fancy-free people living in Alice Springs who do not want to go on the roll. Certainly, that was another restriction that the Distribution Committee had to contend with because the numbers in Alice Springs were not as large as people had expected.

I think the recommendation that the Distribution Committee made, which I believe the government has accepted, that future habitation reviews be conducted before the Distribution Committee undertakes this exercise is very sensible. Hopefully, at the time of the next redistribution, the government of the day will accept that.

Mr Speaker, having said that, I must say now that, in the Labor Party's view, the Distribution Committee has not done the best job that could have been done. We have some severe reservations about the final product. Those reservations relate to 2 areas. We are concerned at the heavy weighting that has been given to rural electorates, and we find it incomprehensible that Arafura, which is probably the most difficult of all the seats in the Northern Territory to service, is again up at the very high end of the scale. I think it has the second highest number of constituents. Arafura and Nhulunbuy share the highest and second highest ratings. We have pointed out the problem with

numbers in Arafura consistently, and I believe that there was a way to resolve that and bring those numbers down a bit in recognition of the problems involved in servicing that electorate.

The other reservation we have relates to what we on this side call the Milingimbi gap. The result of the redistribution is to put Milingimbi and Ramingining in a position where they have no common interests with the rest of the electorate of Arnhem. I find that decision particularly strange because the proposition was objected to by the Country Liberal Party and the Australian Labor Party and, as I understand it from some informal discussions with members of the distribution committee, they themselves voiced concern about the Milingimbi gap. I must say clearly and strongly that there were ways of resolving that problem to ensure a wider community of interest in the seat of Arnhem, which went beyond Milingimbi and Ramingining. Personally, I am very disappointed indeed that those ways were not taken. I think it has detracted from the exercise that the committee undertook. However, the opposition has espoused consistently that, for good or ill, the Distribution Committee is an independent body and its recommendations should be accepted by the Assembly. Although we have those serious reservations, we do not intend to move an amendment because we believe that that would be very dangerous indeed.

That, of course, leads me to the proposed amendments. I accept that the proposed amendments do not go to the alteration of electorate boundaries but rather to an alteration of electorate names. But, in our view, the same principle applies. It is all very nice for the honourable member for Ludmilla to say that the act is not specific on that question.

Mr Manzie: Silent is what he said.

Mr SMITH: Is silent on that question - but I would like to read into Hansard what the Distribution Committee said on this particular question, because it did address it:

The CLP parliamentary party and the member for Wagaman recommended that several division names be changed as current titles do not adequately identify divisions which cross urban community boundaries. The objection is not supported, although the committee recognises there is some validity in the arguments advanced. The committee recommends that: at the next redistribution, the Electoral Distribution Committee, at that time, gives consideration to the appropriateness or otherwise of the suburban-type name for electorates and seeks public comment and input to the consideration of more generalised names for divisions, which could commemorate events, people or other factors of significance to the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, it is clear that the Distribution Committee has considered suggestions that were made to it on the possibility of renaming existing seats. It is equally clear that no proposition was made to the committee that the seat of Ludmilla should be renamed Hudson. No proposition was put forward either in the initial submissions that were made to the committee or in the second round. I want to make it clear that one of the significant elements in the committee's report is that no changes were made to the boundaries in the urban area from its draft report to its final report.

If the sitting member for Ludmilla felt the overwhelming conviction he is expressing now that the name the Distribution Committee had proposed for his

electorate was inappropriate, the appropriate time to put that view forward was in the second round of submissions to the committee, not in this Assembly at this time, particularly when there has been no opportunity for widespread public comment on the issue. It is all very well for the member for Ludmilla to say that he has conducted a telephone poll, and that the people he has talked to in the proposed electorate are happy about it. It is not his seat that we are talking about and it is not his prerogative to name the seat. If we vote on this particular amendment today, we will introduce a political component for the first time in the history of distributions and redistributions in the Northern Territory.

Mr Perron: You're drawing a pretty long bow, Terry.

Mr SMITH: If you don't think names are important in terms of seats, I will dig out a few references where hours and hours of debate have been spent in other parliaments raging over distribution committee recommendations and what the names of seats should be. Of course they are important! I think we will learn just how important the people of Darwin find it, perhaps to the cost of the present member for Ludmilla, because if an uproar is not stimulated by the unilateral decision that we look like seeing taken in this Assembly today, I will be very surprised indeed. The suggestion proposed by the honourable member for Ludmilla is incredible, and I am surprised that the government would consider accepting it. Not only does he want to change the name of the electorate from Ludmilla to Hudson - which, in my view, is bad enough and will only confuse people - but he has chosen a name that, frankly, no one has heard of.

Mr Manzie: Do you know who Ludmilla was?

Mr SMITH: Ludmilla Holtze. She was the daughter of Dr Maurice Holtze, the first curator of the botanic gardens which were established in 1873. Ludmilla Holtze has a significant and distinguished place in the history of Darwin. In fact, the suburb was named by the surveyor at the time, a fellow called Gustav Sabine. A road in my electorate is named after him. We are to replace Ludmilla with the name Hudson. When I first heard it, I thought it was some short form of Hudson-Fysh who was another distinguished Australian who had some connection with Darwin. I thought that the government was being a little cute in not putting the name Fysh forward because it thought it had a member representing fish already - the member for Fannie Bay. Perhaps a more appropriate title for his electorate should be the Division of Fish, to represent his particular pecuniary interests garnered at government expense over the years.

People become attached to the names of electorates. It is an important principle and one that the Distribution Committee has recognised. I shall come to the question of Elsey in a minute; the member for Elsey can relax. It is an important principle that people do recognise names and do become concerned when those names are changed, particularly when there is not adequate opportunity for people to comment on them. For us to change names here, and for a particular change to be proposed by a member of this Assembly who has a fair chance of standing for the electorate in the future, would be to take the matter into the realm of politics. I do not think anyone can deny that.

It is a very dangerous precedent. If we make a political decision about the naming of an electorate, at the next redistribution that will be used as a precedent to say the Assembly can interfere and make a political decisions about electorate boundaries. That is the logical extension of this proposal,

and it is something all thinking members should be very concerned about. Indeed, even at this late stage, I would ask the government to think very carefully about it.

In terms of the proposed change from Katherine to Elsey, I must admit that I have more sympathy for that. My sympathy there is based on the fact that we are talking about the existing name of an electorate. There are probably good reasons to be put forward by the member for Elsey as to why he is proposing his amendment. Again, however, we stand by the principle that, ultimately, it ought to be a decision of the Distribution Committee even if it is not exactly spelt out in the committee's terms of reference. Like it or not, that is how it should be. Again, we have a situation where a member who may well be standing in the new seat is putting forward the proposition that the name suggested by the committee should be changed. To do that would require a political decision and, I repeat, that has dangers for this Legislative Assembly. Previously, we have accepted the principle that the Distribution Committee's proposals should be treated apolitically.

We raise these points in all seriousness. We believe that, if this Assembly supports these amendments today, it will for the first time be entering into political debate on the electoral division process in the Northern Territory. I would urge members opposite to think carefully through the implications of what they are attempting to do and to withdraw the amendment.

Mr STEELE (Elsey): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to support the amendment and to speak to the Electoral Distribution Committee Report. I made personal submissions to the committee in respect of the seat of Elsey. It was my belief that any remarks that I made to the committee in the context of boundary changes were in respect of that electorate. Along the way, I suggested that perhaps a change of name could be made as a mark of respect for a former sitting member, Les MacFarlane. I had no objection to the fact that the committee made a suggestion that the name Katherine would be appropriate, but I believe that decision was made on the wrong basis - hence the suggested amendment this afternoon.

My submission took cognisance of the growth factors in the electorate and the fact that the town's population was likely to double over a very short period. Similar growth probably is not being experienced in any other town in Australia at present. Of course, that growth will bring in many new people. From that point of view, I think it is important to maintain some of the existing features and names.

My submission took into account the entry of the Victoria River area into the western side of Katherine because of the relationship that exists between people of that area and the services which are provided in many ways from the township of Katherine. I make no apology for attempting to facilitate a better relationship between Katherine and the people to the west. In addition to that, I suggested to the committee that the electorate of Elsey could be extended down the highway rather than that area falling within the seat of Victoria River. That would have lessened the load on that electorate's member and provided rather more representational work in the seat of Elsey.

I am a bit concerned that townships like Beswick and Barunga and the pastoral properties to the east of Katherine have been excluded from the electorate of Elsey. I understand the reasons for that, but it seems to me that the member for Arnhem is going to need more than an electric pogo stick



to get around his electorate to service the requirements of those people. In fact, he will not be able to do it. He will need a bumped-up increase in travel allowance or air charter allowances. I guess there are methods of obtaining this, but I believe there is no way that anywhere west of Arnhem Land can be adequately serviced by the member for Arnhem, and that is no reflection on that member.

Obviously, the naming of the seat of Elsey was undertaken with great care. My research shows that the seat of Elsey was created prior to the Legislative Council elections of 20 February 1960. Harold 'Tiger' Brennan, a former Mayor of Darwin, was the first member to represent the electorate, and Les MacFarlane was elected on 26 October 1968. At that stage, Tiger took on the new seat of Victoria River. The name of Elsey has become very important to the residents of the electorate, as I indicated. The relationship between the people of the Mataranka district and the story 'We of the Never Never' is well established. The tourist infrastructure bears a direct relationship to our very brief pastoral history and the outback of Australia. The economy of the electorate is tied directly to the stories of the pioneers and the establishment of European settlement in that district.

The name given to the electorate came from one of the explorers, a Mr J.R. Elsey, described as a surgeon naturalist. Elsey was recruited in England to join Augustus Charles Gregory on the north Australian expedition in 1852 or 1853. The object of that expedition was to provide information to assess a proposal that a colony be established on the northern coast of Australia. The expedition left Sydney on 18 July 1855 in 2 vessels, the barque 'Monarch' of 315 t and the schooner 'Tom Tough' of 120 t. The expedition sailed its way around our northern coastline and, by 15 September, the 'Tom Tough' was well into the mouth of the Victoria River. The 'Monarch', having transferred sheep, stores and equipment to the 'Tom Tough', parted company with the expedition and sailed for Singapore on 28 September.

Gregory and his party had their share of hard times. They battled the elements, sickness and isolation and explored from south of the Victoria River, to Sturt Creek in Western Australia, across to what is now Victoria River Downs, Humbert River, Delamere, Kildurk, Auvergne and Timber Creek. When they returned from this expedition, Gregory invited Elsey to join him on the eastern expedition overland to the Albert River in the Gulf of Carpentaria in Queensland. The 'Tom Tough' was dispatched to Kupang to provision and to return to the Albert River to meet the exploring party. Unfortunately, the vessel arrived in poor condition and Baines, who was in charge, obtained another vessel, an English schooner, the 'Messenger' which was at Surabaya. The 'Messenger' sailed to the Gulf of Carpentaria on 30 August, the day Gregory was due to arrive at the rendezvous in the Gulf. The 'Messenger' finally arrived on 12 November. However, Gregory had set out on the long journey to Moreton Bay on 3 September and reached Brisbane on 16 December 1856. The 'Messenger' finally caught up with the expedition in Sydney on 30 March.

Mr Speaker, that is by way of background to the role that Elsey himself played in this expedition. During the expedition to the Albert River, Elsey Creek was named. This creek's headwaters are on what is now known as Gorrie Station. It runs into the Roper River on Elsey Station close to the Mataranka pastoral lease boundary. It was on Elsey Creek that Gregory states that he discovered one of Leichhardt's camps on 13 July 1856. Elsey was very highly thought of by Gregory. Unfortunately, he died from fever at the age of 24 in the West Indies in 1857.

Elsey has been immortalised by the unique personal story of 'We of the Never Never'. The Elsey pastoral property was established in 1880 and the name Elsey is very much related to and tied up with the people of Katherine. I have no shame in requesting that the name be retained rather than changed. I will go further and state that, as far as I am aware, there was no submission to change the name from Elsey to Katherine in the first place.

In any event, it is quite obvious that, in the early 1990s, there will be a need for further name changes. Not only that, there will be quite dramatic changes to the Elsey electorate and the boundaries in the Katherine region. I have no hesitation in saying that the name Elsey should be retained. I congratulate the committee on its report. I understand perfectly that everybody cannot be totally satisfied with boundary changes.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the report showed that total enrolment on 11 September 1986 was 69 985. This gave a quota of 2799. Under our legislation, we work on a 20% tolerance, unfortunately, which gave the smallest electorate a quota size of 2239 and the largest a quota of 3359, a substantial variation. I had hoped that, even though the committee had the ability to go to 20%, it would confine itself to a 10% tolerance. We all know of the quite outrageous system that operates in Queensland and the recent election which left a government in power with less than 40% of the vote. I hoped that, in these enlightened days, the committee would take that into account and have worked very hard to confine itself within a 10% tolerance. This appears to be the hallmark which the federal government and at least the more enlightened states are utilising as being both practical and democratic.

If we had had a 10% tolerance, the smallest division would have been 2519 and the largest would have been 3079. Because we do not have the 10% tolerance, there is the possibility of an element of gerrymander in that, when an electorate moves towards the 20% figure, it allows a smaller degree of representation for the party that holds that seat and, conversely, a higher degree for the party that holds smaller electorates. It should be of interest to all members to see the variations above and below the 10% tolerance which we would have hoped to have been applied. Above a 10% tolerance, we have Arafura with 3152, held currently by the Australian Labor Party, and Nhulunbuy with 3118 held currently by the Australian Labor Party. Below the 10% tolerance, and these are the seats that move towards a gerrymander, we have Araluen with 2508, Braitling with 2348, Katherine with 2491 and Victoria River with 2483. All these seats are held at present by the CLP. Thus, we have 2 seats above the 10% tolerance held by the ALP and 4 below the 10% tolerance held by the CLP. I hope that, by the time we have another boundary change, this Assembly will have had the grace and the foresight to pass legislation to put into place a 10% tolerance. If that has not occurred, because the light of reason has not dawned on members opposite, I hope the committee itself will address that issue and move to ensure that the 10% tolerance becomes a matter of fact if not of law.

I share a number of the misgivings about the situation in Arnhem. When I first saw it on the map, it reminded me of the Danzig Corridor which created so much strife in the lead-up to the Second World War. I fear that the current boundary may create many problems for the people of that area and for the member who attempts to represent it. It does not provide an adequate community of interest and I hope that that is addressed at a very early stage.

Where the report refers to display sites - where maps of the committee's proposals are displayed - I noted that, in the rural areas, they were generally police stations and court houses. In rural areas, Mr Speaker, if

you wish to get a message across to the community, you would be better served by using schools, council offices and health centres rather than police stations and court houses.

With regard to the amendment, I agree that it would be quite inappropriate for us to start fiddling around with the report even though, as I said, the temptation is there with respect to the 20% tolerance. However, once we opened that can of worms, we could be in for all sorts of trouble and I think that we would, very rightly, suffer the wrath of the people of the Northern Territory for seeming to disregard the whole purpose of having the committee, which was to take the matter out of the hands of politicians and to put it into the hands of another group.

My electorate of Stuart has not been changed and I am grateful for that. Stuart is one of the original seats. It was established in the old Legislative Council in 1947 and it is the only original seat that remains today. Many well-known members have represented it, the first being Mr Jock Nelson and, later on, came Mr N.E. Smith Snr. Both were very famous Labor identities and I am happy to follow in their footsteps. Mr Speaker, you yourself occupied that seat for a considerable time before advancing years, or boundary changes, made you decide to retire to the urban spread of Braintree.

To turn to the topic of electorate names, I do not believe it would be appropriate for us to make changes to them. I was going to remark that I have been advised by the Labor candidate, Mr Jamie Robertson, that he is quite happy with the name of Ludmilla, but I do not think that it is a matter for jokes or for comments of a political nature. We are addressing an important matter of principle. In any case, I really do not see the necessity for change.

As I see it, a couple of members have a bit of an axe to grind locally and feel that this is the way they can make a mark in their electorates. I believe that the Chief Minister has capitulated in the face of their suggestions and has not realised the principles that are involved. I call on the Chief Minister to exercise a bit of discipline and leadership over his men and to say to them: 'Withdraw these amendments. The matter is farcical. It has nothing at all to do with the business of this Assembly. It should be left with the committee where we very rightly placed it, and we should get on with the business of the Assembly'.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I would bring to the attention of the member for Stuart the fact that the 20% plus and minus tolerance in electorate numbers is written into a federal act, namely the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act. If he is so keen to do something about it, he should approach his colleagues in Canberra. It is not something for us to determine here in this Assembly.

Mr B. Collins: That is an interesting political statement. Are you conceding that the federal government has the right to change that unilaterally?

Mr D.W. COLLINS: It is not beyond it. That government set the tolerance. I would agree with the Leader of the Opposition that the numbers on the electoral roll in Alice Springs do not really add up in terms of the growth of the town. From doorknocking the area during the election campaign in 1983, I recall a number of people who spoke to me and wished me all the very best. They said that the election issues really grabbed them but, unfortunately, they could not vote because they did not get their names on the roll. That

was in an area which had been established for a reasonable time. If I heard that once, I heard it close to 300 times.

I shall be interested to see the result of work done by my secretary when we get the computerised street rolls showing who is on the electoral roll in Sadadeen. I shall then be able to find out just who is not on it. I have often used my electorate newsletter to urge people to have their names placed on the roll. In spite of the legal requirement to be on the electoral roll, people often elect not to enrol. Perhaps they come to Alice Springs and do not enrol because they do not intend to stay for very long. Who knows the multitude of reasons there may be for a person not having his name placed on the electoral roll?

I believe that the opposition drew a very long bow indeed in suggesting that there was something political about the 2 well-reasoned arguments put in respect of electorate names. If members opposite can see something political in that, their imaginations go much further than mine. To suggest that we propose to jump from making changes of that kind to determining this Assembly's electoral boundaries at some time in the future is ...

Mr B. Collins: You can't see that?

Mr D.W. COLLINS: ... just so ridiculous. We wouldn't do it.

Mr B. Collins: We have your assurance, do we?

Mr D.W. COLLINS: At least my word is my bond which, unfortunately, is something which we cannot expect from Labor people. Look at the number of promises Mr Hawke made to get himself into government. What a great fellow! They have virtually all been dashed to the ground, and he deserves to be condemned. At least my word is my bond and I do what I say I will do.

The main reason I wish to speak this afternoon is to put on record the fact that the name of Sadadeen does cause confusion in my electorate. This is because the suburb of Sadadeen is tucked away on the eastern end of the electorate. We have the east side valley, most of the old east side area down to the swimming pool, Traeger Park and the Central Business District. The Territory Tidy Towns sign on the Kiddies corner informs people that they are entering the electorate of Sadadeen. People do express some confusion. A topic was given for high school students in the Tidy Towns competition: 'Why should I bother to beautify and keep Sadadeen clean'. Some of the answers said, 'I should not bother really because I do not live in Sadadeen'. Later, the topic was discussed and it was found that many lived in the electorate of Sadadeen although they did not live in the suburb of Sadadeen. There is confusion.

I learnt why the electorate was called Sadadeen from a member of the Distribution Committee which carried out the last redistribution. He told me that it was chosen simply because it was convenient and that the names would be determined eventually by the Executive Council. I talked to members in the party room. I spoke to the former Chief Minister about having what I thought was a more useful name for the electorate, but I was not successful in persuading him. There is confusion in the electorate over the name, and I welcome the advice in the report before us that the Distribution Committee will consider electoral names at the next redistribution. I certainly intend to have some input into possible names which I believe will be acceptable to the community, and I will work with the community to seek its views at that time.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I plead with the government not to proceed along this course. I hope it will respond, even at this late hour. 'What's in a name?' is a trite question. The answer, as it has always been, is a very great deal. However, that issue does not even need to be addressed in the debate this afternoon because the relevance of names is not the point at issue. I am disappointed that members opposite are taking their present course.

The issue is that the Hatton government is creating the precedent of using the numbers of this Assembly to interfere with the determinations of the Distribution Committee. It has never happened before and I hope that we shall not see it happen now. All honourable members of this Assembly have commented, from time to time, on the excellent procedures that we have for redistributions in the Northern Territory. Like the members for Elsey and Ludmilla, we may be disappointed and upset by some of the decisions that are taken and, in fact, I am outraged personally and disgusted by the boundaries for Arnhem. I think it is a disgrace and I have said so 3 times to members of the Distribution Committee. However, there is no way in the world that I would try to use the numbers of this Assembly to interfere with that, because that would create a precedent that should not be set. We established the committee. I remember the debate that created it. We set a model for most of Australia. Each of us feels agreement and disagreement with what the committee determines but the Assembly has never before interfered with the committee's determinations.

I could not have received better support for my case than the comments of the member for Elsey. The Hansard record will show what he said this afternoon. He is feeling smug because, along with the member for Ludmilla, he got his way in the party room on this matter. I say again that the name changes are irrelevant in terms of the principle that is at stake. Whether they are good or bad names is really not important. The member for Elsey said that he made submissions to the committee on a name change for his electorate and he did not get his way. He tried to justify to us his reasons for using the numbers of the Assembly to change the committee's determination. He made submissions that were not accepted. Because he did not get the numbers - which we would all dearly love to have - on the distribution committee, he got the numbers in the CLP party room. We are seeing the results of it now, for the first time, in this interference with the committee's determination.

It does not matter that the occasion is an electorate name change. The fact is that we are using a vote in this Assembly, which will be opposed by the opposition and on which we will divide, to interfere for the first time with the determinations of the Distribution Committee. It does not matter whether it involves a name change or a boundary change, the precedent will remain. We should not do it. I plead with the government not to proceed with this. The government should think again because the value of the name changes does not outweigh the dangers of the precedent that this Assembly is setting this afternoon. It is not worth creating this precedent to satisfy a couple of members of the CLP.

I am not happy with the boundaries of Arnhem and I think it is probably fair to say, considering the submissions that were made, that there is not a single member of this Assembly on either side who is happy with them. There is nothing political in that. The fact is, and this was echoed to me positively by members of the committee, that it is a most unfortunate boundary for the residents of Milingimbi and Ramingining. No one doubts that. Those people are stuck on the end of a corridor of land and, from my experience of the expense and difficulties of chartering aircraft to service our electorates

properly, it will cost about \$2000 to get there from wherever the member locates himself in the body of the electorate. I heard no arguments when I put those views to the Distribution Committee and I do not think any member of this Assembly would argue about it. It is an unfortunate boundary. It looks silly and it is silly. It is unfortunate because the rest of the redistribution has been well done.

There is one basic problem and the member for Stuart touched on it. It is unfortunate, but it is difficult to overcome. The basic principle of loading up the urban electorates towards the upper end of the quota and loading the rural electorates towards the lower end of the quota is difficult to achieve in the Northern Territory. We have a complete reversal of the normal situation here. The reason is quite simple. With the number of seats that we have, it is very difficult to cater for the problems of fitting 4 seats into Alice Springs.

Arafura is top of the pops for the second time running and I do not think that that is particularly good. It is the second time in a row that Arafura has led the field in terms of numbers of electors. I do not have any difficulty in terms of the individual electorate but I make the point, on which there was no argument from the distribution committee, that there is an underlying principle, in terms of ease of servicing electorates, which should apply and that is that, the easy-to-service, physically small urban electorates should be loaded toward the upper end of the spectrum, and the large rural electorates should be loaded the other way. This principle is generally accepted around Australia.

I concede the great difficulty of juggling the figures to cater for the anomaly of Alice Springs, a town of 20 000 people, which has 4 members of a state-type parliament representing it. Inevitably, it is very difficult to juggle the figures without coming out with extremely small numbers for the Alice Springs electorates. However, I would be the last person to suggest, because of the precedent we have so far created, that I should get together with the members opposite who disagree with the boundaries of Arafura, as I am sure most of them do and, accepting the great difficulties of accommodating all of the disparate interests that the committee has to accommodate, use the numbers in the Assembly to change the decision. It would be a most regressive step when we have set a model for Australia in good legislation and good practice which, until now, has never been interfered with.

The member for Elsey has the hide to stand up and tell us the story of how he put in a bid for a name change for his electorate and could not get the numbers on the committee. Nor should he have been able to. It would be nice if all of us could have the opportunity to juggle it the way we want it. As a result of that, he sought and obtained the numbers in the party room. It deserves saying again that the only nauseous thing that is happening here this afternoon is the precedent that the government is creating by having this debate and by necessarily having a vote on the issue, for the first time, and a division between the parties on what is, in fact, a very important matter of principle. The name change is not worth it, Mr Speaker. I humbly submit to the government that it is not worth it.

We might think that Katherine is a bad name and Elsey would be nicer. Personally, I think there is an argument for naming it after the previous member. I remember him with a great deal of respect and affection. We had an excellent relationship until his death, and I can see that there is some justification for naming the electorate after him. I can see no justification whatever for this weird change of Ludmilla to Hudson. How that has the

slightest local substance, I do not know, particularly when the suburb of that name is still contained within the electorate boundary. Hudson was a gunner who shot something or other down, but the electorate is now named after an important local identity who lived here and whose father was the first curator of the botanical gardens which are close to the electorate. How we could achieve any great value from that change, I cannot see.

I concede that there is some strength in the argument for keeping the name of the electorate of Elsey, but it is a move that, on principle, should not be allowed to succeed. If the amendment proceeds, there will be a vote on it for the first time and we will divide on a matter of principle. We will indicate that this Assembly should not use its numbers, no matter how much individual members might dislike the Distribution Committee's decisions, to interfere with the names of electorates, boundaries or any decisions that the committee has made. We had our turn, Mr Speaker, every one of us. The member for Elsey was not the only one who made a submission about what he wanted to see as the final result. We all did. Some of us obtained what we wanted, but many of us did not. That is the result of any redistribution. Why don't we stick with the precedent we created last time and simply cop our knocks? Those who got what they wanted should be pleased and those who did not should learn to live with that result. We must not create a horrible precedent by making a party room decision using the government's numbers in the Assembly to toss over part of the Distribution Committee's decision.

It will be most unfortunate if the government proceeds along this course, for no worthwhile gain that I can see. If there was some massive electoral or political mileage to be gained by it, perhaps I could understand. If the government were able to demonstrate some massive political advantage to be gained for the member for Elsey or the government itself, perhaps then the prize might be worth what we are throwing away in exchange for it. But there is nothing to be gained by it. How can any honourable member opposite seriously say that the value of such a change will outweigh the fact that, for the first time, a decision of the Distribution Committee has been interfered with, and it has been done by the Hatton government to accommodate a couple of members who could not get the numbers on the committee, but managed to get them in the party room?

Personally, I do not think the name changes are worth that precedent, and I put that humbly to the government. I would not want to do so, but I foreshadow that we will introduce a private member's bill, if necessary, to canvass the issue again, insisting that the Distribution Committee has that power. I hope that common sense will prevail. We have never needed to go into minute detail before because there was a general consensus that we would not use the numbers in the Assembly to interfere with the decisions the committee made, no matter how disagreeable some of us might find those divisions individually. I see some members nodding their heads in agreement there. I ask honourable members opposite to give some consideration to what possible value there is in creating this most unfortunate precedent in order to change the names of 2 of the electorates, and I ask them to reconsider.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to withdraw the amendment.

Leave granted.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, as the Assembly is aware, at page 3 of book 2 of the report of the committee, it is advised that the committee recommends that:

At the end of the next redistribution, the Electoral Distribution Committee, at that time, give consideration to the appropriateness or otherwise of a suburb-type name for electorates, and seek public comment and input to the consideration of more generalised names for divisions which could commemorate events, people or other factors of significance to the Northern Territory.

I advise honourable members that it is the intention of the Chief Minister to write to the Distribution Committee to ask that that review of electorate names take place forthwith.

Mr McCARTHY (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I want to say a few words about the redistribution and my remarks will relate entirely to the electorate of Victoria River. The task of redistributing the electoral boundaries of the Territory is not an easy one. It required a great deal of thoughtful consideration and was very difficult as is borne out by some of the boundaries that have come about. Certainly, the electorate of Arnhem is untidy and, rather like that of Victoria River, it appears to consist of a number of pieces tacked together here and there.

I made contact with the Distribution Committee with the aim of clearing up some of the problems that I saw in the electorate of Victoria River. The electorate consists of a number of fairly different areas of the Territory: from Darwin east to the Kakadu boundary; from Darwin west to the Western Australian border; south to the southern side of Riveren Station; north of Lajamanu; out around Elliott and Nutwood Downs in the east; and surrounding Katherine. It is a very diverse and unusual electorate. The numbers to date have been approximately 2770 but, with the changes, they will drop to about 2480.

I objected to the original redistribution, which removed areas south of Katherine on the eastern side of the highway, because it meant that, to look after the area on the western side, I would have to travel that distance but without being able to see very many people. I have enjoyed having responsibility for that area south of Katherine. However, the Distribution Committee saw otherwise and, in fact, took more of the south-eastern side of the electorate away as a result of my objections.

Mr Speaker, something that causes me concern is the response to my objection. It is enshrined in volume 1 of the report, and I will read it:

The member for Victoria River drew attention to the below quota number of electors in the proposed division, and argued for the retention in Victoria River of areas along the Stuart Highway transferred to the Barkly division. He pointed out that, to service the limited number of electors at Gorrie, Western Creek, Sunday Creek, Hidden Valley and Muranji, it is necessary to travel down the Stuart Highway. The objection is not supported, but the committee recognises the validity of the travel involved in servicing a minimal number of electors at the properties concerned.

Currently, only 4 electors are involved there, but there were the places on the eastern side that had been taken away previously.

The committee believes that these can easily be serviced by the member for Barkly, and has proposed a boundary change accordingly.

This is the part that I really take exception to, Mr Speaker:



Further, whilst Victoria River is below quota in the short term, on the committee's current proposals, with the continued development of Palmerston, the committee envisages the movement of substantial numbers of rural electors from the Palmerston division to Victoria River at a subsequent redistribution.

To me, that is an absolutely hopeless addition to the Victoria River electorate. As I said, it is already very diverse. It is made up of stations, farming areas, mining areas, Aboriginal communities, highway communities and a whole range of places. To bring in what is basically a rural urban - or however it is termed - community attached to Darwin would be a mistake. It is already a very difficult electorate to cater for because there are so many varying needs. To add that particular area would create a real problem.

As I said, about two-thirds of the southern part of the division focuses on Katherine. All places south of Adelaide River focus on Katherine as their supply point and as the town to which they go for government services. Eventually, Katherine will be the obvious focus for the Victoria River division, at least, the western side of Katherine will. As the member for Elsey said earlier, a logical inclusion would be to bring Victoria River into the Katherine area eventually. Whether that is the farming area to the north-west, western or even the southern side of Katherine, incorporating Mataranka, is not really a matter at issue here but, in fact, Katherine is a focal point for a very large portion of the electorate. It is my view that, eventually, the electorate of Victoria River should focus more into that area.

The proposal to come into Palmerston would make the electorate of Victoria River very difficult to handle. I would have to jump Koolpinyah to do that. The people in the north of the division of Victoria River focus into Darwin itself, not into Palmerston or any part of Palmerston. The numbers have been reduced to about 2480 in this particular redistribution and, if that has been done with the idea that at some future redistribution the division will focus into Palmerston, it seems to me that this is putting the cart before the horse. The appropriate time to cut numbers down to cater for that would be at the next redistribution. I really do not see any common sense in the argument that has been put forward there. I hope that, when the Distribution Committee looks at Victoria River in the future, it will forget any idea of bringing in the Palmerston area and look rather at Katherine as a focal point for the division.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, first of all, I would like to acknowledge the work done by the Electoral Distribution Committee. There is absolutely no doubt that the committee's task was extremely difficult given the need to balance the quotas and, at the same time, address matters of commonality of interest etc. Whilst Territorians enjoy the benefit of a democratic system which involves 1 person 1 vote, 20% quota variation between divisions is very necessary given the nature of the Territory and the distribution of population. Not only are Territorians privileged in having a democratic system in place, they receive the benefit of having an efficient and thoroughly professional committee to implement that system.

If any sitting member has cause for complaint about changes to boundaries, I would suggest that perhaps the member for Wagaman has the most cause. The press has reported that the electorate of Wagaman has disappeared; it has been dismembered and totally eliminated. That is almost true, Mr Speaker. Some 30% only of the original electorate remains. Some 70% has been transferred to surrounding electorates. That has come about because of the growth that is

obvious in the northern suburbs and a great disparity in numbers between the electorate of Leanyer and the balance of the northern suburban seats.

I suppose we all have our little beefs about the actual details of redistribution. Certainly, I believe that there are some small disadvantages in the boundaries of the division which is named Leanyer at present. However, I have no doubt that all members of the CLP who have seats in the northern suburbs will retain those seats regardless of what the boundaries are. To suggest that there is some political motivation is totally irrelevant.

The member for Wanguri, for example, has gained an area that is in the northern part of my current electorate in the suburb of Wagaman. That part of the electorate is extremely supportive of the CLP and its policies. The member for Wanguri also gains part of the suburb of Woodleigh Gardens where there are a number of people living in quite a nice area. These are people who support free enterprise and I am quite sure they will support the CLP in the electorate of Wanguri.

The only problem I had with the proposed boundaries was that there was that slight indentation cutting out a portion of Woodleigh Gardens. However, I am certainly not interested in dying at the stake. If anyone has any cause for complaint about boundaries, it ought to be the member for Wagaman. Nonetheless, I have no doubt that, given the opportunity to meet with all of those new people and to renew old friendships there, I would quite quickly gain their support anyway. Thus, that is an irrelevant matter.

Members of the opposition also had much to say on the matter of names. I believe that the procedure needs to be put into perspective for the benefit of honourable members opposite. Whilst they are not in their seats, I hope that they will read Hansard tomorrow. After I had run through the draft proposals, I commented to the committee in relation both to the boundaries and names. I suggested to the committee that there was justification for changing the name of the new electorate of Leanyer.

The new name is of no major drama to myself but I believe that there are good and logical reasons for having a new name. I suggested to the committee that it consider alternative names. The suggestions that I made at the time were Vanderlin, Lee Point and 1 or 2 others. Since then, a large number of people have made other suggestions to me, some of historical relevance and some suggesting original landholders such as Holtze. We heard about Ludmilla Holtze earlier but honourable members will be interested to know that Maurice Holtze was granted some land out there following the survey by Goyder. I think the actual surveyor was Mitchell.

The names of early politicians in the Legislative Council were also suggested, but no one name seemed particularly favoured. It was my interpretation of the comments that were put to me that probably the name that caused the least distress or gained the most support - whichever way you like to look at it - was Vanderlin which is simply the name of Vanderlin Drive which bisects the proposed new electorate of Leanyer geographically. The new electorate contains the entire suburb of Wulagi, with some 1500-odd voters; Leanyer, on the opposite side of Vanderlin Drive, with some 1100 voters; and part of Woodleigh Gardens with almost 300 voters. It can be seen from those figures that approximately 60% of the electorate is contained within the suburb of Wulagi. I can sympathise with the committee having now experienced the problems associated with naming an electorate after 1 of 3 suburbs. However, if we wanted to use the name of a suburb, maybe Wulagi would have been a better choice. I am not being super-sensitive about it, but I guess

the committee took into account that the area that will grow in numbers will actually be the suburb of Leanyer, and I understand that.

Having served 3 suburbs in the electorate of Wagaman, I know there was some confusion among people, particularly as a major thoroughfare separated Wagaman from Wulagi and Anula. That was obvious when the member for Sanderson and myself turned up at Wulagi school or Anula school, as we both often did. There was certainly some confusion in people's minds as to who really was their local member. The location of the electorate office in Wagaman created difficulty for some people in identifying the geographic location of their electorate. Whilst I do not have a problem with the use of historic names or names of early politicians or whatever, I believe that support should be given to the name of Vanderlin. It is not only neutral in relation to the names of suburbs, but it has some geographic affinity. People can think of Vanderlin Drive and identify the general area with it.

Once a suggestion for a change is submitted to the committee, there is no further public input. That should be made extremely clear to members opposite who have stirred up this storm in a tea cup. They are the ones trying to make political mileage out of the whole thing. There is no way in the world that they can justify their outrageous allegation that the CLP is forcing the issue to gain some sort of political advantage.

Prior to the closing time for comment on draft 1 of the committee's report, I expressed my concern verbally and followed up with a rather hasty telex right on the deadline. It was my belief, from discussions with a member of the committee, and it is my understanding from the act, that responsibility for the naming of electorates is really the prerogative of the Administrator and, therefore, of the Executive Council. Whilst the committee itself has forwarded suggestions on previous redistributions and did so again this time, it was my understanding from discussions - although it was certainly not confirmed officially - that the issue of names was not something that it was critically concerned with. Its principal concern was to ensure that the distribution was equitable and that people were not disenfranchised by things such as gerrymanders.

I understood that we were to discuss in the Assembly, where appropriate, proposed changes to names, and that the result of those discussions and any points put forward would form part of a recommendation to the Administrator for his deliberation. I am disappointed. I believed that the place to discuss and debate the matter was in the Assembly. I even paid the Leader of the Opposition the courtesy of putting my case to him privately this morning. I thought my suggestion was quite rational and logical and had significant merit. Unfortunately, the opposition has made an incorrect interpretation and argued that authority for naming of electorates lies with the Distribution Committee itself. That is quite contrary to my belief. After failing to receive acknowledgement from the Leader of the Opposition that he would support my move, I reluctantly withdrew. I did not want to be part of any storm over the naming of the electorate which to me is no big deal. I am quite confident that I will win the seat regardless of the name of the division. For the record, the main motivation in the suggestion put forward by a group of people was that Vanderlin Drive was geographically in the centre of the existing electorate. Regardless of what might happen at some time in the future, and even if a future redistribution pushed the electorate north into Leanyer, Vanderlin Drive would still be a boundary of the electorate.

The name Vanderlin dates back to the early 1600s when the Dutch India Company had already made several landings on the west coast, the north coast

and around the Gulf area. The company sent Captain Abel Tasman to see if he could find a shorter route to the south seas and to Chile. It was thought that there was possibly a passage through the Torres Straits. Tasman did not discover that passage but followed a previously-discovered land mass along the west coast of Cape York Peninsula, around through the Gulf of Carpentaria, up along the north of Australia, around Melville Island - which, as we know, he thought was a cape - right around the west and south coasts of Australia to Tasmania. On that voyage, Tasman named many rivers and he plotted fairly accurate maps for maritime purposes. The Dutch had quite reasonable techniques for mapping. One of the features that Tasman named was Vanderlin Island after one of the Dutch governors who signed the dispatches for Tasman's trip. Vanderlin Island was actually identified as an island by Flinders in about 1802. Had it not been for the fact that the Dutch East India Company was interested only in trade, we could all have been speaking a different language today and perhaps have Dutch names for our electorates. Every street in the suburb of Wagaman is named after a Dutch East India Company ship or crew member. Whilst that does not have any great emotional effect on me, nevertheless I wanted to illustrate that, in the early 17th century, the name Vanderlin had been applied to north Australia.

I welcome the decision by the Chief Minister to refer these matters back to the Distribution Committee because, when the storm is taken out of the words of opposition members, this is really no big deal. Leanyer is only 1 of 3 suburbs involved in the electorate and, in fact, comprises only 40% of the existing numbers. With the disappearance of the existing Wagaman electorate, and the shifts between the existing electorate of Leanyer and the new electorate of Karama, there may be some confusion in the minds of the electors, particularly as we have 2 confident sitting members, who naturally enough will win their seats, and the electorate of one swaps names with that of the other but takes on a substantially new area. From that point of view, I look forward to providing further input to future deliberations of the committee.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak to this report. I must advise that I am very concerned about the boundaries of the electorate of Arnhem. Many people made representations to the committee about the shape and size of the electorate. I note that the member for Elsey wrote to the committee expressing his concern about the inclusion of areas such as Mataranka, Barunga and Beswick at the bottom end of my electorate. That is not to say that, if the report is accepted, I will not visit my constituents there. I will do my utmost to visit them as time goes by until the next redistribution.

Arnhem has had a very long history in terms of its relationship to the area of land that has always been known as the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve from the time when the late Rupert Kentish was first elected to the Legislative Council and then succeeded by the member for Arafura until 1983 when I was elected to the seat. The communities of Milingimbi, Ramingining and Elcho Island have always had close ties. I was rather disappointed to see Elcho Island removed from the electorate of Arnhem because it is the place of my birth and I shall always refer to it as home. I was disappointed also that Lake Evella was taken away from the electorate. In fact, Lake Evella is an offspring of the community at Galiwinku. However, I do not dispute the right of the Distribution Committee to include those 2 communities in the electorate of my colleague, the member for Nhulunbuy.

I thought that the committee would take into account some of the representations that it received in respect of the length and the breadth of

the area that I would have to cover. In fact, most of the area that is in my electorate now is inaccessible by road for 6 months of the year, and the cost of air charters is very excessive these days. I was very disappointed that I lost Elcho Island and Lake Evella but I am sure that the member for Nhulunbuy will be able to represent the interests of those people as well as I have. I promise that I will represent the interests of the people at Barunga, Mataranka and all the other communities that are in my electorate now.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a couple of quick comments in relation to the report. My sympathy goes out to the previous government speaker who seems to have been fairly well wasted and has become the honourable member for nowhere.

On a more serious note, Mr Speaker, I think that the redistribution is an absolute tragedy for the member for Arnhem who has put in so much work. Having had the experience myself of very radical changes being made to boundaries in the period prior to the last election, I know the difficulties involved in representing vast rural areas that change in that way. I want to place on record my concern that the member for Arnhem's electorate has been changed in that way. I do so doubly because the area that has been taken out of his electorate, as he has just explained, is the place of his birth. It is regrettable in the extreme that the Distribution Committee was unable to reorganise the boundaries in a more sensible way.

Mr Speaker, comment was made by previous speakers about the question of rural weighting. The adjective 'rural' conjures up visions of neat paddocks and fields and, in those terms, the electorate of MacDonnell can scarcely be regarded as rural. It is bush rather than rural. It is worth placing on record the contrast between the process of redistribution in the Northern Territory and the process of redistribution in Queensland. I find it quite interesting that, whatever other ideas the Northern Territory government may take from the Queensland government, it certainly has not taken the idea of rural weighting. Far be it from me to adjure the government to bring in anything like a rural gerrymander. I think I hear a couple of groans from government members. I do not think that the cause of democracy is well served when city electorates in north Queensland have voter numbers of around 20 000 while, half an hour's drive away, there are rural electorates of 8000. I think that the principle of 1 vote 1 value is an important one.

I also think that the problems involved in representing vast bush areas should be considered. It would be reasonable, as the member for Arafura said, to see the bush electorates towards the bottom of the tolerance level rather than towards the top. This morning, the Minister for Community Development chastised me because I had been somewhat dilatory in coming to the aid of a community on Alcoota Station which was seeking to make representations about its power supply. I point out to the minister and his confreres in the government that representing a large rural electorate poses considerable logistic problems.

As I take great delight in pointing out to southern politicians, MacDonnell is larger than Victoria even if it is somewhat less populous. You would be well aware of that, Mr Speaker, having represented a similar vast bush area yourself. My recollection from question time this morning is that the Minister for Community Development chastised me by saying it was quite obvious that this was an illustration of the speed with which the opposition works. He was talking about the fact that I had not picked up this particular problem at Alcoota. I point out to him that what is obvious about the incident is that it is an illustration of the vast extent of my bush

electorate. Perhaps his suburban fastness of Wanguri lulls him into a false sense of appreciation of people and distance and needs.

I would add, in this particular debate on the report of the Distribution Committee, that I do not expect any rural weighting, but I do believe that the committee should take into consideration the difficulties of representing the diverse, widely differing and widely placed populations of the isolated parts of the Territory. It has not done so and that is regrettable.

Reference was made to seats in Alice Springs. It is one of the extraordinary anomalies of Northern Territory policy that, in Alice Springs, members of the Legislative Assembly canvass votes amongst fewer people than do members of the local town council. Members of the town council have to canvass votes over the whole population of Alice Springs whereas each local member of the Legislative Assembly canvasses votes amongst 25% of that particular population. That is risible, to say the least. With those few comments, complaints, whinges and bellyaches, I heartily endorse the report.

Motion agreed to.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Summary Offences Amendment Bill (Serial 228) and the Firearms Amendment Bill (Serial 243) from being presented and read a first time together and 1 motion being put in relation to, respectively, the second readings, the committee report stages and the third reading of the bills together; and the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

#### SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 228) FIREARMS AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 243)

Bills presented together and read a first time.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, it is appropriate that these 2 bills should be considered together. The Firearms Act is the responsibility of the Chief Minister. However, as the Firearms Amendment Bill is consequential upon the Summary Offences Amendment Bill for which I have responsibility, on this occasion the Chief Minister has approved of my dealing with the amendment to the Firearms Act.

The purpose of the bill to amend the Summary Offences Act is twofold. Firstly, the amendment to section 43 of the Summary Offences Act is to ensure that stock mustering by means of helicopters is made subject to the requirement of section 43 of the Summary Offences Act. That section enables any owner of stock, or his agent, to lawfully enter upon the land of another person to drive his own stock from that land. To take advantage of the section, the stock owner must give 2 to 7 days' notice of his intention to muster to the landholder upon whose land the stock are located. It is an offence to conduct the muster without having given the required notice.

Since that section was enacted, mustering by helicopter has become common practice. The problem to be rectified by this amendment is that, when mustering stock from a helicopter hovering over the land, a person cannot necessarily be said to have entered upon the land. The law is not clear on this point. The common-law courts have been inconsistent in holding people for trespass when occupying airspace over another person's land. Whether a trespass to land in common law is equivalent to entering upon land in summary offences legislation is another doubtful question. For this reason, the government has decided to amend the act to put the matter beyond doubt. The bill achieves this simply by providing that reference in the relevant section to an entry upon land is to include entry into the airspace above the land. This amendment will clarify the obligations of landholders and avoid any confrontation and litigation that may otherwise arise.

The further amendment to the Summary Offences Act requires consequential amendment to the Firearms Act. The purpose of these amendments is to abolish the requirement that the group of offences in part VIII of the Summary Offences Act be committed in a proclaimed locality. Most of those offences are antiquated and do not justify police enforcement effort. Two examples are conveying slops, night soil etc in the street between certain hours, and covering and securing entrances to cellars and coal holes. Some of the offences are duplicated in other acts. The government will be reviewing these and repealing unnecessary offences. Proclamations of new town areas have not kept pace with Territory development as the offences involved are largely moribund and so have not justified up-to-date proclamations being made.

The one exception is section 75(1A) which makes it an offence to discharge a firearm in a public place, near a public place or from a vehicle in a public place. The repeal of this provision is proposed in the Summary Offences Amendment Bill and the provision will be re-enacted, in a modified form, through the Firearms Amendment Bill. There are 2 reasons for this. First, it is preferable to have all modern firearm offences rationalised within 1 act, the Firearms Act, and, secondly, and more importantly, the expression 'public place' is widely defined in the Summary Offences Act and the discharge of a firearm would be made an offence of wide geographic application throughout the Territory.

The government has no wish to make shooting and hunting activities that law-abiding Territory citizens and visitors to the Territory have engaged in for perhaps many years illegal. Therefore, the amendment to the Firearms Act will require that an offence is established if the discharge of a firearm occurs so as to endanger, annoy or frighten, or in a manner which is likely to endanger, annoy or frighten, the public or any person. I commend the bills to the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

#### LAW OFFICERS AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 230)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to establish the Solicitor for the Northern Territory. During the latter part of this year, a comprehensive review of the structure and organisation of the Department of Law was

undertaken. The objective of the review was to improve the department's efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness to the government, the Attorney-General and its clients. The review recommended the structure of the department embodied in this bill.

The present rigid structure of the department militates against flexibility in legal and non-legal areas. The proposed structure will promote mobility and flexibility. It embraces the grouping of functions based on similarities in the nature of work performed, specific requirements of subject matter and a concern for client needs. Generally, more use is to be made of the pool concept which will enhance flexibility and the speed and quality of response to government needs. The structure provides a major projects and 'fire fighting' capacity to ensure that the department is able to provide the highest level of service as the need arises. It makes provision for the government's economic strategy in a commercial and industry development division. With its expertise and experience, this division will play a major role in assisting the implementation of the government's trade, financial, marketing and industry development policies. It will draw upon outside legal expertise, according to the requirements of each client, or in circumstances where it has not been efficient or practical to build up in-house expertise and, by so doing, it will provide a valuable service to clients in coordinating and evaluating outside advice.

An important function of the department is the provision of solicitor services to its clients. The Secretary of the department, as Chief Executive Officer, is responsible under the Public Service Act for the proper performance of all functions of the department. Much of the solicitor services work of the department is carried out under the direction of the Crown Solicitor and in his name. However, a significant proportion of solicitor services are provided from units which are not subject to direction or control by the Crown Solicitor.

In addition to difficulties with management, coordination and consultation, these arrangements have created problems in relation to professional responsibility. These problems have arisen because the Law Officers Act imposes professional responsibility on the Crown Solicitor, but long-accepted requirements of organisational efficiency have dictated that that control should be decentralised. It follows that professional responsibility should be decentralised in the same way. At present, units outside the professional control of the Crown Solicitor are not properly professionally accountable. These problems have arisen in other Australian jurisdictions where similar structures have existed. The Commonwealth Department of the Attorney-General, which was faced with similar difficulties, was restructured in 1984 along lines recommended in this submission. A significant element of the Commonwealth department's restructure was the establishment of the Australian Government Solicitor.

In place of the personal office of the Crown Solicitor, clause 6 of the bill provides for the establishment of a statutory corporate entity to be known as the Solicitor for the Northern Territory. The Solicitor for the Northern Territory will perform the function of solicitor for the Territory government, ministers, Territory authorities and certain other bodies and persons. In effect, the Solicitor for the Northern Territory will be the firm name under which the legal services function of the Department of Law, which would ordinarily be performed by a solicitor for his client, will be carried out.



The Territory Solicitor will not be a separate authority, constituted by a person or body of persons, nor will it have its own staff. The Secretary of the Department of Law, and certain legally-qualified senior officers of the department authorised by the secretary for that purpose, will be empowered to act in the name of the Solicitor for the Northern Territory. Thus the members of the firm will be, in effect, the secretary and the authorised officers. They will have the ordinary responsibility of a solicitor to the courts, in respect of acts done in the name of the Solicitor for the Northern Territory. This will ensure the usual judicial control over those professionally responsible for handling matters before the courts in a way which does not presently exist.

Officers authorised to act in the name of the Solicitor for the Northern Territory will be responsible for their actions in the conduct of their activities to the Secretary of the Department of Law and, through the secretary, to myself, the Attorney-General. In addition, the authorised officers will be subject to the direction of the secretary and, where so directed, the responsibility to the court for acts performed in accordance with those directions will rest with the secretary. Only in this way is it possible to reconcile public service responsibility with professional responsibility.

The Solicitor for the Northern Territory will be empowered to act on behalf of those entities, persons and bodies on behalf of which the Crown Solicitor is presently empowered to act by virtue of section 9 of the Law Officers Act. For the purposes of acting as solicitor for other persons and entities, he is entitled, under the bill, to the rights and privileges of a solicitor. These entitlements are the same as those bestowed currently on the office of Crown Solicitor. In addition, for the purposes of acting in the name of the Solicitor for the Northern Territory, the Secretary or an authorised person will be entitled to do all things necessary and convenient to carry out the function, and will be entitled to the same rights and privileges as a practitioner who practises on his own account.

The schedule makes consequential amendments to change 'Crown Solicitor' to 'Solicitor for the Northern Territory'.

Mr Speaker, I would like to foreshadow that, at a later stage, I will be moving for a suspension of standing orders so that this bill may pass through all stages at these sittings. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise in this evening's adjournment debate to speak on a matter of some importance. The issue I refer to pertains to a fairly well-known tourist attraction located in my electorate. As well as being a prime tourist attraction, it is a place that has been of great importance to the Pitjantjatjara people and another tribe for thousands of years. This place has been the subject of considerable media interest.

Mr Speaker, with the recent recognition of Aboriginal traditional ownership to Ayers Rock, there has been a considerable resurgence of traditional and ritual association represented by the Rock which is recognised

by many of these communities. I think that many honourable members will recall that, at some stage, the media referred to a period during which visitors were unable to go to Ayers Rock because of the very important Red Ochre Ceremony. For the benefit of honourable members, the so-called Red Ochre Ceremony is one of the most important sacred, secret ceremonies associated with western desert culture. I have lived in communities where everything shuts down for a considerable period and where movement has been severely restricted at that time. It was a matter of considerable concern that visits to Ayers Rock might have been closed down for up to 5 or 6 hours.

Several days before the event, I was present at Yulara when that possibility was canvassed with various operators and various organisations associated with Yulara. In the event, it was not closed down. Access was restricted for a mere three-quarters of an hour. It is my view that those very powerful associations enhance Uluru as a tourist destination. They enhance the importance of that place and its capacity to draw people to the Territory. We know what the figures are. The number of visitors to Ayers Rock is increasing at the rate of about 20% per year.

However, a couple of government frontbenchers were not prepared to cop it. Of course, one of them was the Minister for Community Development who happened to be down there at roughly that time. Contrary to the information that had been provided by the representatives of the Mutitjulu community and people in the community that access to the Rock might have been restricted for a few hours, he gave the impression that it would be closed for some time. I have here a transcript of his comments which were delivered quite gratuitously to the meeting of Ministers for Consumer Affairs. He said:

I have 1 item of general business and let me say that I have been pondering whether or not it is appropriate that I mention it here, because I must confess to the fact that it is one of the political bombshells, or touches on one of the political bombshells, in the Northern Territory. I do want to stress that I am not mentioning it for the effect. I am mentioning it because you just happen to be here at this particular time and the media may well get in touch with you and ask you to comment on it, and it could place us, as Ministers responsible for Consumer Affairs, in an embarrassing situation.

Mr Dale: But I did stop them from closing it, didn't I.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the minister continued:

The Uluru National Park, as you are all aware, is owned by the Aboriginal community out there and managed from Canberra.

That is quite wrong of course. The minister should at least get his facts right when he is talking to high-level meetings of this sort. The Uluru National Park is not owned by the community out there, as he said. In terms of the operation of the Aboriginal Lands Rights Act, traditional owners may or may not live in the Mutitjulu community. At any particular time, there will be some people living in that community who are traditional owners and some who are not. Equally, there are people who would regard themselves as traditional owners of Ayers Rock, as defined by the act, who may be living at Ernabella, Amata, Docker River, Areyonga or a number of other places. At least one would expect the minister to get his facts right.

Mr Dale: I stopped the closure, didn't I.

Mr BELL: I hear the minister interjecting that he stopped the closure. The fact of the matter is that the Minister for Community Development - and I really wonder about the appropriateness of that label in this context - had absolutely no effect on it. I am not in a position to be able to describe at length my understanding of those ceremonies because of their very restricted nature.

Mr Dale: You were in on the planning.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the minister, contrary to his scaremongering claims, access was restricted for about three-quarters of an hour. It is my belief that those ceremonies emphasise the associations of the Rock and enhance it as a drawcard for visitors.

A month later, we had these banner headlines in the Sunday Territorian: 'Hanrahan Fears Rock Closure'.

Mr Dale: Don't we all. We are all terrified.

Mr BELL: Yes, my word. That was the object of it.

Mr Dale: Tell us about how you were in on the negotiations, Neil. Go on, tell us. Put it in Hansard.

Mr Hatton: Don, he is talking rubbish. Let him talk to himself.

Mr BELL: I did not quite pick up the interjection from the minister but I will be quite happy to talk with him about it at any time afterwards.

Mr Dale: Mind my reputation, Neil.

Mr BELL: I think that both these people, who would put themselves up as responsible ministers of the Crown, ought to have a slightly higher sense of responsibility than to employ those sort of scare tactics. I will not quote extensively from the comments of the member for Flynn. He is the man whose exact role on the frontbench of the government is to enhance the tourist appeal of the Northern Territory - and what do we find? We find that sort of rubbish.

What did the tourist operators have to say about it? Mr Speaker, I will tell you what they had to say. They are not at all happy with the attitudes adopted by frontbenchers in this government. Here, for the benefit of the Chief Minister, I draw a distinction between his views and the more rabid outpourings of the Minister for Community Development and his confrere, the member for Flynn. I will tell you what the tourist industry thinks of their comments.

I refer honourable members to a clipping from the Centralian Advocate of 22 October which quoted 2 senior figures in the tourist industry in Alice Springs, Mr Peter Menger, the local manager of Ansett Trailways, and Mr Keith Castle, the manager of CATA. What did they have to say? The article was headed: 'No problems at the Rock'. It said:

Ansett Trailways and CATA Tours managers, Peter Menger and Keith Castle, said they were not experiencing any adverse effects to their touring operations because of the restrictions at Uluru. They said the problem lay with the Northern Territory government's refusal to put a Territory representative on the Uluru Board of Management.

I think I have established my point. It is about time that the Northern Territory government gave up trying to manipulate the issue of ownership at Ayers Rock for the sake of a few cheap political points. I might say in passing that I was delighted to hear the Chief Minister in question time last week refer to a softening of attitude in terms of placing a representative on the Ayers Rock Board of Management. I did not appreciate his outrageous accusations about the contributions I make to deliberations on the board. I have no doubt that they are constructive.

While I am on the issue of press reports about Ayers Rock, I notice that we still have a journalist from the Northern Territory News in the Chamber. This is not a particularly hot scoop any more, but quite an interesting apology appeared in the Bulletin in July this year. It was a statement by the Willesee program and it said:

On 14 and 15 February 1985, we broadcast stories filmed at Uluru. In the course of compiling these stories, we filmed in the areas around Ayers Rock including the living area of the Mutitjulu community. We recognise the significance of the Rock to the members of the community in their duty and desire to do all things necessary to protect and preserve Uluru, its environment, and the areas of cultural and spiritual significance in the vicinity. This duty includes restricting filming of and access to certain places. We recognise the community's right to privacy and to protect and preserve Uluru, and we deeply regret the distress and inconvenience to the community caused by our presence and the programs in general.

In the context of this adjournment debate, I have no intention of rehearsing the fairly sad chapter with respect to the Willesee filming, to which the Chief Minister inadvertently contributed, but what I find to be of considerable interest is that that apology was the subject of newspaper articles throughout the country. I have a copy from the Sunday Press of 3 August 1986: 'Under orders from the Supreme Court of New South Wales, television's controversial current affairs program, Willesee, has been forced to publicly apologise to the Aboriginal people at Ayers Rock'. That article was not printed anywhere in the Northern Territory. I suggest that that is quite a story. I really wonder whether the journalists in the Northern Territory did not see the apology, did not read these articles or is it that some subtle form of censorship has been exercised?

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in the adjournment debate last night, in one of his few contributions to debate in this Assembly, we heard the member for Arnhem urge the government to introduce legislation to penalise people for petrol sniffing which, of course, is a major problem throughout Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. He did not specify whether he wanted the government to consider the petrol sniffers as offenders or those people who supplied petrol to them or both. We have this problem in the communities where young people are being supplied with petrol by elders who are making a buck out of it. He did not clarify exactly what he meant.

Whilst I applaud the plea made by the member for Arnhem for action in this area, I find his call quite amazing at this time. I say 'amazing' because he has been the member for Arnhem for 3 years and, in that time, he must have visited many Aboriginal communities in his electorate on many occasions. If he has not visited those communities, certainly he should have. This evening, he told us how much more difficult that will be now that his electorate has been expanded in size. As the member is well aware, petrol sniffing has been rampant in most communities in his electorate for a number of years. Indeed,

there has been a problem with substance abuse, not just in his electorate, but in Aboriginal communities throughout the Northern Territory. I refer to the abuse not only of petrol but also of alcohol and kava. I have spoken about kava in this Assembly on a number of occasions over the last 2 years.

I understand that the Drug and Alcohol Bureau is undertaking research into substance abuse in general. I was hoping that a report would have been brought down by now. However, I understand that the more it investigates this subject, the more complex it becomes. As a result, the time given to it to bring down that report has been extended, and rightly so, because we need to come up with the right answers.

In spite of the member's personal knowledge of and close contact with those involved, he has not raised the matter of substance abuse by his fellow Aboriginals except for the odd passing reference. This has continued to amaze me. I thought he would be shouting the plight of his people from the rooftops and banging on the doors of the relevant ministers. Has he done that? No, he has not. In fact, I can hardly recall any of the members opposite - and 5 out of the 6 of them represent rural electorates or electorates where the predominant population is Aboriginal - raising the matter of substance abuse at all except by way of a passing reference.

As was mentioned yesterday, petrol sniffing is rife in Aboriginal communities. Young people can be seen wandering around with cans hanging from a piece of rope around their necks trying to flag down cars. In fact, they tried to flag me down once on the Stuart Highway in central Australia in order to buy petrol from me. On occasions, they can purchase petrol on their communities and, as I mentioned earlier, some people are making a buck out of that as they are with kava. The results of this were evidenced in Alice Springs recently when 22 young Aboriginals were admitted to the hospital suffering from the effects of petrol sniffing.

I have been to a number of Aboriginal communities and have seen the problem at first hand. It is quite horrific; I can assure you of that. What amazed me was that nothing had been done about it by the 5 members opposite until the member for Arnhem raised the matter here last night. The member for Arnhem requested the government to legislate to make petrol sniffing an offence. He mentioned the community of Angurugu on Groote Eylandt, which is in his electorate, as being one community where the problem is evident. Mr Speaker, I can confirm this because I am aware ...

Mr Ede: You can't even spell it.

Mr SETTER: I can spell it all right. I can confirm this because I am aware that earlier this year a number of Aboriginal adolescents broke into a fuel store at night in an attempt to steal petrol. Unfortunately, in that attempt, in order to see what they were doing, one of them struck a match. You can imagine the result. The fuel ignited, there was an explosion and several were badly burned. In fact, one fellow was incinerated because, as the others escaped, the door slammed closed and the poor fellow was caught inside, and that was the end of him. That was all due to their attempt to steal petrol for sniffing. It was a tragic result that was caused by the addiction of these young people. It illustrates the lengths to which these young people will go in order to satisfy their needs.

The member for Arnhem suggested legislation to make petrol sniffing illegal and, indeed, there could be some merit in that although I really wonder about that. He then went on to oppose the option of isolating

offenders on outstations, which has been the practice in some areas for a number of years now. I can only deduce from his comments that he is recommending that convicted offenders be jailed. It is a known fact that Aboriginal men on Groote Eylandt, in particular those from Angurugu, consider they have not been initiated into manhood until they have spent some time in Berrimah Prison. It used to be in Fannie Bay Gaol prior to the opening of Berrimah Prison. Until you have spent some time in Berrimah Prison, you are just not a man on Groote Eylandt.

Mr Ede: Have you been there?

Mr SETTER: Are you referring to Berrimah Prison? I have been through it; my word I have.

Mr Speaker, in his October 1983 report on Groote Eylandt prisoners, Mr David Biles, the Acting Director of the Australian Institute of Criminology, reported that the rate of imprisonment on Groote Eylandt is from 7 to 8 times higher than the Northern Territory average and 25 times higher than the national average. Yet the member for Arnhem suggests that we introduce legislation which will put more of those young people into jail. I cannot understand the logic of that.

By far the majority of offenders on Groote Eylandt are young males. Mr Speaker, let me quote an extract from Biles' report: 'Young men on Groote Eylandt thus have a great deal of spare time which may be used in watching video films, petrol sniffing and obtaining and drinking alcohol'. In fact, over 50% of the offences committed by these young people are break and enters. These are very interesting statistics.

I cannot support the member for Arnhem's suggestion that we introduce legislation that will create a higher level of imprisonment than exists currently. The member for Arnhem criticised the suggestion that Bickerton Island be used as a place to send these young people. The concept was that the young offenders be sent to Bickerton Island, which is a large island adjacent to Groote Eylandt, and confined there for a predetermined period. The honourable member complained that a settlement had just been established on Bickerton Island and that the confinement of offenders on the island would interfere with the activities of people in that community. I dispute that. Bickerton Island is large, and it would be easy to send those young people somewhere on the far end of the island where they would not interfere with the established community in any way at all.

When I was at Groote Eylandt earlier this year, I took the opportunity to have discussions with the deputy chairman of the local Aboriginal council at the Angurugu settlement, and he told me about this idea of sending young people to Bickerton Island in the charge of an elder of the community. The idea was to confine them there, send a boat over once a week to check that everything was all right, but leave them there, well away from the petrol, and let them fend for themselves and live off the land for a few weeks.

Subsequently, I was at Elcho Island, again earlier this year, and I spoke to the chairman of the community council there. He said that they had exactly the same idea for dealing with young offenders there. There is an island to the north of Elcho Island. Again, petrol sniffing was the main offence, and he wanted to send the young offenders in his community up there to let them sweat it out for a few weeks. The hope is that the young people will dry out and break the habit of petrol sniffing.

Mr Speaker, the concept is to use Aboriginal law not white man's law in these cases and to let the elders of the tribe make the decision on how they want to handle these young offenders. If it is their desire to confine them on an adjacent island, away from the community, then let them do it. I understand that, when the magistrate goes to Groote Eylandt to hear cases involving Aboriginal people, at least 2 and perhaps several of the Aboriginal elders sit on the bench with the magistrate and he consults with them before he brings down his verdict and imposes a penalty. There is a blend there between Aboriginal law and white man's law in the sentencing of these offenders. I support that concept and I do not agree with the comments made by the member for Arnhem. I am extremely surprised that he made them because, more than anybody, he should be in touch with the feelings of the Aboriginal people in his electorate.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, this afternoon I would like to tell honourable members briefly about a project I have in mind which I believe may be the forerunner of a small industry in the Northern Territory in which a number of people who are on the land could participate at minimal expense to themselves. It might not raise much money but it would be of great interest to the Territory.

I have made initial inquiries regarding the requirements of field killing for meat for human consumption. Recently, the Minister for Primary Production has answered several questions about the provision of crocodile meat for human consumption. In his reply to a question this morning, goannas came into the act too, so we are talking about eating goannas and crocodiles. I know I may rouse the ire of some Greenpeace adherents, environmentalists and all those people who call themselves 'greenies' ...

Mr Hatton: Bob Hawke.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Yes, him too. However, I will take them all on because I have reason on my side. I am referring to the field killing of agile wallabies for human consumption. The first thing many people who live on the outskirts of the rural area do when they see a wallaby - and I castigate them for it - is get out the .22 and shoot it. Ah, good dog tucker! To me that is a great misuse of natural resources even though the dogs have to be fed. I have no objection to the killing of animals for human consumption. I am not a vegetarian. My tastes are omnivorous. I am carnivorous and herbivorous as most ordinary human beings are. I rear wallabies, and the little ones that I have in my care are nice, cuddly things whilst they are babies, but they are reared on the same terms as the pet lambs and chickens one has on a farm.

Mr Perron: And fish.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: And fish. The honourable member for Fannie Bay has fish as his pets. I suppose he has them in the house too. Probably, he gives them a great deal of love and attention also but, no doubt, he eats the odd catfish from time to time.

First of all, I have to establish whether field killing of meat for human consumption could be allowed legally in the Northern Territory. My initial investigation has led me to the fact that it has not been considered. I received considerable correspondence from an officer of the Department of Primary Production who was very helpful and, I must say, very prompt. However, I am still waiting for a draft code of practice on field killing of meat.

In some states in Australia, field killing for meat is allowed. I refer to the field killing of wild pigs in New South Wales, which find a very ready market in West Germany where the people consider the meat a delicacy. They must be out of their minds to want to eat rank old boar meat, killed in the field but, as the saying goes, 'chacun a son gout'. No one could persuade me to eat it. However, if people are prepared to kill these rank old boars in the field legally, and there is a market for the product, that is good.

Some animals can be slaughtered at the abattoirs, dressed, inspected and put on the market for human consumption; for example, the ordinary farm animals such as cattle, buffalo, pigs, goats, horses and poultry. It would be completely impracticable to kill some animals in abattoirs. I refer to 2. One is a native animal and one is exotic animal. The exotic animal is deer, and it would be completely impracticable to take deer to ordinary abattoirs. I cannot say for certain whether they are field killed, but abattoirs would have to be designed and built especially for them. It would be completely impossible to take wallabies to an abattoir to be killed because of the extremely characteristic, high metabolic rate of their physiological makeup. They would become extremely stressed. If an extremely stressed animal is slaughtered in an abattoir - if it has not killed itself before it arrives there - there is a risk that the meat will be highly contaminated with salmonella which would render it unfit for human consumption. Therefore, those animals would have to be killed in the field and then transported to abattoirs.

Department of Health regulations are quite clear. The meat from these animals must be inspected, as is other meat, and passed for human consumption. That means the animals would have to be processed at an abattoir licensed for the domestic market. At the moment, I do not have the stock to go to the export market and I do not think other primary producers in the Territory would have the stock. But, I might add, there is nowhere in the Northern Territory that you can eat locally-killed wallaby meat which has been passed officially as fit for human consumption. I believe kangaroo meat is on the menu in some hotels but, obviously, that would come from the states.

A distinction is drawn between meat from wallabies and meat from kangaroos. Kangaroos and antilopines are strictly protected in the Northern Territory. Wallabies are not protected north of the 15th parallel which is where we are living. I have seen, and heard of, farmers killing hundreds and hundreds of wallabies to protect their rice, rockmelons, bananas, sorghum or whatever crop they are growing. I will not say that it is obscene - although it is verging on it - to kill animals and leave the bodies without making use of the protein in their makeup. I have this almost puritanical ...

Mr D.W. Collins: Hatred of waste.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Yes, hatred of waste - thank you, honourable member. Add to that the fact that, from a few inquiries I have made, I know that there is a very good market for the meat. I rang up 2 hotels in 1 afternoon and both of them were extremely interested. They thought I had the meat there and said they would take any amount that I had. One hotel that I rang belongs to a large chain and said it would be very interested to buy any meat that I had and send it interstate. I had to say that I was only investigating the project.

Because of my high regard for conservation values, I have endeavoured, at all times, to do the right thing and obtain the requisite permits from the Conservation Commission for the animals I have held and the animals I am



holding now. There would not be too much difficulty there. I am waiting to hear the views of the Department of Primary Production and to receive and read a copy of the code of practices that I believe it has. I believe this code of practices was drawn up after the Royal Commission into the Meat Industry some years ago, when the subjects of illegal shooting, pet meat being sold for human consumption etc came to the surface. Certain practices used by some operators in the Northern Territory were less than legal although most of the trouble that led to the Royal Commission being instigated in the first place was started by interstate operators. They bought most of the meat from the Northern Territory as pet meat and sold it for human consumption. Whilst I have eaten pet meat in my time, I knew that it was pet meat and I took appropriate precautions when cooking it.

If field killing of wallabies can be encouraged in the Northern Territory, I can see a small primary industry being established. At the moment, I would be probably the only person who is breeding wallabies for their meat but, even so, I have only a few. However, I can see a small industry being set up quite legally and quite conveniently if certain basic rules are followed. It could be entered by operators of pastoral properties because, whilst the market for cattle and buffalo meat is perhaps not as energetic now as it could be, I believe there could be quite an active market for wallaby meat. This is even more likely when the price of other game meat is considered - and I would class wallaby meat as game meat.

I found out the wholesale prices of venison imported into Australia from New Zealand. Mind you, this would be top class venison. The figures that I received were for cryovac venison which would be top-class meat tenderised through the cryovac procedure. I was told that producers can obtain over \$18 per kilo wholesale for the top cuts. I would class wallaby meat on the same level as that. Considering the dressed-out weight of an ordinary-sized wallaby, it could be quite a nice little operation and very rewarding financially.

If something like this could be started, with appropriate changes to legislation and regulations applying to the meat industry, I can see people taking more care. I do not believe that they would shoot wallabies as haphazardly as they do now. I can see that certain rules would be necessary. One would shoot only the males and leave the breeding stock, the females. This rule would have to be adhered to strictly. The females are very important. Of course, I am not a sexist but I realise that ours is really the superior sex. Only one other female is in the Chamber at the moment, in the public gallery, and I am sure that she would agree with me.

I believe that, if the field killing of meat were permitted under law, greater protection would be afforded to the wallaby as a variety of marsupial. I believe greater protection would be afforded also to other breeds of marsupials here. I refer mainly to the antilopines which may be found in quite large numbers. There are not many large reds in the Top End but protection would be afforded to them. I believe any lobby which opposed the killing of kangaroos for meat could be overcome. I believe there is only one way to deal with this ratbag fringe of protestors. If such people were to interfere with the legitimate pursuit of this primary industry on a station property, there would be ways and means of dealing with them. That would certainly be true on my property.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not often that I agree with the member for Koolpinyah but, in her adjournment speech today, she espoused something that I believe: you do not shoot anything, except feral cats, unless you intend to eat it.

In the adjournment tonight, I want to comment on the completely outrageous speech we heard earlier from the member for Jingili. He spoke in wide-ranging terms on issues relating to the electorate of the member for Arnhem. He purported to know something of the situation out there. I could make a cheap comment and say that we do not tell him what price he should put on his orange juice and that maybe it would be better if he started to talk about something he knows about. I had hoped that he would talk about an area in his own electorate. However, he spoke about Bickerton Island and various communities around the East Arnhem area. He himself represents a pocket handkerchief electorate that would take a month to find if we put it in the electorate of Arnhem. If it were located in my electorate, we would probably never find it. His is a little postage stamp of an electorate.

I am led to wonder about the situation at the Rapid Creek Water Gardens, which I am reliably informed, is within the electorate of the member for Jingili. I was amazed that he did not cover the question of petrol sniffing in the Rapid Creek Water Gardens. It was not mentioned. He was too busy ranging around the Aboriginal electorates in the East Arnhem area and talking about Bickerton Island. He did not talk about the various other problems that are associated with the water gardens: vandalism, fornication, drinking and other activities that occur in that area. I was quite shocked to hear the honourable member as he took his ignorance in both hands and covered the length and breadth of the East Arnhem area making outrageous remarks about the electorate and the way that the member for Arnhem looks after it.

I do not think that there would be a member opposite who would be able to deny that, during the last 30-odd years, the member for Arnhem has spent at least as much time in his electorate as any member here has done in his or hers. He was born and bred there. The statements made by the member for Jingili - who blew in and blew out again like a typical 2-bob tourist, in the course of what was probably a 10-minute stopover while the plane dropped off a few passengers and took on a few more - were completely outrageous. Mr Deputy Speaker, you know yourself that, in the adjournment debate, members really should confine themselves to matters they have some knowledge of.

Mr Finch: Sit down then.

Mr Manzie: You ought to read some of the speeches you have made.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I must appeal to you for some protection from the outrageous volly of interjections I am receiving from the members opposite. Mr Deputy Speaker, if you are not prepared to provide that protection, I will have to continue speaking. You possibly know yourself that there are problem areas in Darwin. These things are not confined to rural areas. I would ask members to have a look at the problems in their own electorates before they presume to make judgments on the way in which members, whose electorates are thousands of times the size of theirs, carry out their duties.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is a point that I was going to make earlier today but I decided to leave it until the adjournment debate. The Labor Party does not believe in making adjustments to the size of, or numbers in, electorates to help people out in the rural areas. We do not believe in gerrymander. However, we do believe in providing additional resources, some of which are provided in the Northern Territory, to assist people to look after those electorates. What Labor members do not do, when they come from little pocket handkerchief electorates, is neglect their own electorates and go out into other areas and try to make out that, in the space of 10 minutes, they have learned more than the sitting member has learned in the last 30 years.

There is another point that I wish to cover tonight. The Yuendumu Sports were held over the long weekend in August. Once again, it attracted thousands of people. It was a matter of some slight regret to me that a number of people in the Assembly who, when I spoke on the Yuendumu Sports at this time last year, said how keen they were and that they hoped to attend this year, but they did not. The member for Jingili was one of them. He indicated how keen he was to come down to my electorate and attend the Yuendumu Sports. I invited him at the time and said, 'Bring your own swag, and you will be most welcome'. No one can say that we are not generous in the electorate of Stuart. We are very welcoming as long as people do not try to 'put on the dog' and expect some special treatment. Unfortunately, once again, there was not one member opposite present during the whole of the 4-day Yuendumu Sports meeting. We did not miss them, Mr Deputy Speaker. I only feel sorry for them that they did not avail themselves of the opportunity to attend such a well-run sporting event.

The A-grade women's basketball was won by Lajamanu and Nyirripi came second and that was an excellent effort for a fairly small community. The B-grade was won again by Lajamanu. The A-grade men's basketball was won by Nyirripi. That was a fantastic effort by such a small community, particularly as it was the first time that it had participated officially in the sports. The B-grade was once again won by Yuendumu team who were quite surprised at being upstaged by Nyirripi in the A-grade. The A-grade softball was won by the Papunya team from the member for MacDonnell's electorate.

The best female athlete was Miss April Spencer from Nyirripi. She could run; she was fantastic. Given a bit of professional training, I believe she could give anybody in the Northern Territory a real run for their money. Once again, the best male athlete was Jim Booth from Kintore. He has a habit of coming either first or second in that particular contest every year.

The B-grade football was won by Lajamanu which did not really surprise anybody because they were excellent. What did surprise people was the result in A-grade because, in the semi-final, Lajamanu managed to beat Nyirripi by only 1 kick. In the final, despite various disputes and an argument about the timing and an extra 15 minutes etc, Lajamanu still won, having been down 1 kick when it disputed the final whistle.

Rock n' roll, gospel and country and western music was played. We had Mr Gordon Bryant, who in the distant past used to be Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, as an official guest. People were also very happy to see that Mr Clyde Holding turned up in an unofficial capacity. The then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Arafura, was there also. People from my side of the political fence were well represented at the sports. We all enjoyed it as we always do when the people at Yuendumu put on the excellent sports carnival that they have held for many years. We noted the absence of members from the opposite side and we shrugged our shoulders and said: 'They are probably sitting in their air-conditioned rooms, sipping tea, drinking lemonade and cooling down. It is a bit rough for them out bush'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will close with that. Once again, as I do every year, I invite honourable members opposite to roll their swags, throw them in the back of the car, bring their tucker and we will find a place for them out beside a campfire down on the other side of the range. They will be quite welcome. We are not political out there; we just enjoy our sports.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about road signage. Road signage has been the subject of numerous comments made in the

media and by the tourist industry, particularly in central Australia. The states have various policies and probably the most effective is that followed in Tasmania where all signage outside the control of various councils has to be approved individually by the Director of Tourism. Tasmania, of course, is noted for its lack of visual pollution.

I believe the time has come for the Territory to reassess its policy on signage. Perhaps to the surprise of some members of the Assembly, I am not against signage on the sides of highways in the Territory but, of course, I am not advocating the placing of large billboards in areas of scenic beauty either. Indeed, I feel that, after one has been driving for a couple of hours along what in some cases can only be described as fairly boring roads looking at low scrub on both sides of the highway because the road surface is so low that it precludes the opportunity to look out over the countryside, when one comes upon a sign indicating that petrol or food is only 50 km away or that such-and-such a motel is in the next town, it comes as a visual and mental relief. I believe that some of these signs revive the driver and sharpen the mental faculties a bit even if only for a few moments. In some cases, they can even revive a driver who has almost been lulled into sleep.

The tourist industry feels that, as a government, we do not do enough, through the way our signage policy is carried out, to support the considerable investments that it has made in the Territory. In Alice Springs, the government is building a new bridge off the highway over the Todd River near the Old Timers' Home. This bridge, which will connect with the Ross River Highway, will open the way to a multitude of tourist facilities with year-round access. The industry feels that a large sign is needed on the main highway to direct travellers to the attractions and facilities that are located down the Ross Highway. They are considerable, both natural and man-made. The highway leads to various properties and Ross River. Eventually, if one continues to the end of the highway, one arrives at the old goldfield at Arltunga. On the way down that highway, numerous gorges and magnificent vistas over the mountain range can be seen. There are also man-made attractions such as the Heavitree Gap Motel and Caravan Park, the MacDonnell Range Tourist Park, Pitchi Ritchi Sanctuary, the Stuart Auto Museum Restaurant, the Sienna Village Motor Lodge and caravan park with its 3 restaurants, the camel farm and, of course, the goat farm. Altogether, these constitute big financial investments that would run into many millions of dollars.

I believe that signs should be erected on both sides of the highway to indicate to the tourist what is available and so at least help the operators to achieve a satisfactory level of patronage. Whilst directional signs with symbols are preferable aesthetically, I sometimes wonder whether a white bunch of grapes on a blue background really conveys the fact that Chateau Hornsby is just down the road. We should address this problem before a series of illegal signs are erected and then removed by the Department of Transport and Works.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I rise to reply to some comments which the member for Jingili made about statements I made in last night's adjournment debate, and I would like to advise the member for Jingili that I do not agree with some of his comments. I did not catch everything that he said, but I have often asked him to come out to Arnhem Land, not just for 10 minutes or half an hour, but to spend a night out there, or 2 nights, or maybe a couple of weeks, to see some of the areas that he would not see otherwise. As you would be aware, Mr Speaker, some government members go out to communities but they only spend a day or so there before they return to major towns like Tennant Creek, Katherine or Nhulunbuy.

I referred to petrol sniffing at Umbakumba where I saw some kids actually sniffing. I was there about a week before the sittings. I took the opportunity to visit those people to speak to them about NESA training programs that they have been having some difficulties with. The member for Stuart commented on matters relating to the member for Jingili's electorate. I wish the member for Jingili would pay more attention to matters that are his concern because I certainly get out as much as I can within my electorate. I visit outstations that the member for Jingili would never have heard of.

Mr Setter: Invite me. I will come. I have told you that before.

Mr LANHUPUY: Those outstations are important in my electorate. The electorate of Arnhem covers a pretty large area even without the new extended boundaries.

Mr Setter: I would get lost. I would need you to show me the way.

Mr LANHUPUY: As it is now, it extends from the Wessel Islands right down to Hodgson Downs, and goes right up to Groote Eylandt, Bickerton and all those other places.

When I referred to Bickerton Island the other night, I mentioned the old man who established the community, Joe Wurrupmada, who has been living there for 5 years. He, his community and his family shifted out there to get away from Angurugu which has a hell of a lot of petrol sniffing problems. That was one of the main reasons why he moved out. Many other people in my electorate have moved away from communities that are having difficulties with tribal and other conflicts within the councils themselves. I urge the member for Jingili to let me know when he is out there next. I am sure I could arrange a trip for him to visit some outstations for a couple of days and really rough it, as the member for Stuart said.

I would like to mention my support for a group of people at Alyangula who call themselves the Isolated Parents Group. They have written to the Minister for Community Development to obtain some support for the types of facilities that they want in that community. As you can appreciate, Mr Speaker, many family problems arise in a mining town due to the shift changes and so on, and these people are asking for support from the Minister for Community Development. They have written also to the Women's Unit of the Prime Minister's Office in Canberra seeking support in obtaining the facilities which are needed so much in isolated communities. I urge the Minister for Community Development to take their request into account and to grant them whatever is possible within the existing financial constraints.

The final matter that I would like to speak about concerns the shops at Darwin Airport. Whenever large numbers of planes are flying in and out, the airport shops seem to be open. I have not had the opportunity to find out who runs those shops. I think it might be Dudley Holdings, but perhaps the member for Wagaman may be able to assist me.

Mr Finch: They are all controlled by the federal Minister for Aviation.

Mr LANHUPUY: The matter I am concerned about was brought to my notice by a constituent of mine who comes from Elcho Island. He told me that, on Saturday mornings, when the flight for Gove departs at about 6 am or 7 am, the shops are open. Yet at 10.30 am, when the flight to Bathurst Island, Ramingining and Elcho Island leaves, they are closed. Often the people from those places do not have time to go to the major shops. They like to take

goods back for their families and children or other people who might be expecting some sort of present. Yet, even though their plane leaves 4 hours after the Gove flight, the shops are not open for them. It has happened to me on about 4 occasions when I have been travelling back to Galiwinku. I believe that that is inconsiderate towards the people concerned, and generally bad service.

I have spoken with some of the flight attendants and people from TAA, Air North and Ansett. It may seem to be a small issue, but it is an important matter for people living in isolated communities in the Northern Territory. I urge the Minister for Transport and Works to follow that matter up and see if he can get some action.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I would like to touch on a couple of matters in the adjournment debate this evening. Firstly, and somewhat disappointingly, today the member for Nhulunbuy stated that the Northern Territory government has opposed every land claim. I was disappointed that he made that statement. A year or more ago, the member for Arnhem made a similar statement and I corrected him on a number of points. I thought the member for Nhulunbuy might have been aware of them.

Northern Territory government officers are present before the Aboriginal Land Commissioner at every land claim hearing. They provide a great deal of information to the Land Commissioner in his deliberations on each claim. That is not in itself an opposition to land claims. The Northern Territory government has a responsibility to place before the Land Commissioner any matters that it considers his attention should be drawn to in the exercise of his functions and discretion.

The first thing that comes to mind are matters of law. We are talking about a very new and innovative piece of legislation. The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976 broke completely new ground in so far as the Westminster parliamentary system is concerned. Therefore, as time went by, a number of legal questions arose in relation to the operation of the act and the powers of parties before the commissioner. There have been questions about which land is claimable and about traditional ownership and attachment. Obviously, many such questions were raised for the first time and some had to be followed through to the High Court for final and absolute determination under Australian law.

A good example of that was - and I am testing my memory here - the matter of grazing licences. The Northern Territory government argued before the commissioner that these were not available for claim under the Land Rights Act and the land council argued that they were. That matter went to and fro. Such a question had to emanate from a land claim because, unfortunately, under the Australian system, you cannot simply pluck questions out of the air and have them referred to courts for a determination. It was very sad for me to learn that that is how the legal system works. It will give us some heartaches on the road to statehood. We were told at a recent seminar in relation to statehood that we cannot even refer to the High Court questions on the interpretation of the Australian Constitution because that is not the way the system works. There has to be a conflict.

In that case, the High Court ruled against the Territory's position. It ruled that grazing licences are open to claim. And so the process goes on. In the meantime, that very action held up that particular land claim and possibly several other land claims or aspects of land claims. There have been many other questions that have arisen over the years. In respect of the Kenbi

land claim, I think a number of questions are still outstanding and perhaps before courts for determination.

The Northern Territory government has a responsibility to raise these questions before the Land Commissioner to have them determined, and also simply to provide information to the Land Commissioner. He is required to look at questions of detriment. It is fair to say that it is not really in the interests of the Aboriginal claimants for their legal representatives to raise questions of detriment before the Land Commissioner. However, someone should raise questions on behalf of the wider Northern Territory community, such as whether the grant of that land might affect a popular recreational spot, the rights of pastoralists or motorists or tourists or whomever. The Northern Territory government's advisers identify such problems as best they can and bring them to the attention of the Land Commissioner in terms of detriment.

Matters of fact are also raised. Our knowledge relating to Tennant Creek's water supply was probably a good example: where the next water would come from for Tennant Creek and how long the current bore field would last because the new one was within the borders of a land claim. The Northern Territory government provided all the factual information on water resources, which only it had, to the Land Commissioner. I am sure many other matters are considered on the basis of such information.

I suppose it is easy to feel from afar that the government is forever before the commissioner making a song and dance about one aspect or another of a land claim and even testing the strength of a traditional attachment. Honourable members will be aware that, on occasion, the Land Commissioner has ruled that there were no traditional owners of a particular parcel of land that had been claimed. In other cases, there were disputes and traditional owners other than the original claimants were found as a result of the commissioner's inquiries and the Northern Territory government's intervention to test the strength of the claim. All of these actions are perfectly legitimate and, indeed, it is the responsibility of the Northern Territory government to undertake such activities. Nevertheless, these are represented by members opposite - possibly genuinely, but wrongly - as evidence of the Northern Territory government opposing every Aboriginal land claim. That is not true.

I cannot remember their names but I believe there were 2 land claims on which the Northern Territory government raised virtually no questions. In other words, it had no matters of detriment to raise and no matters of fact to present. Obviously it did not dispute that the claimants were the traditional owners. Even if one says that any intervention by the Territory government is an opposition to land claims, I believe the statement that the Territory government has opposed every land claim is totally incorrect. I believe there were 2, and I am sure information could be sought on those if necessary, on which there were virtually no submissions from the government.

In addition, I would like to point out that the Northern Territory government has passed considerable areas of land to Aboriginals without any statutory requirement on it to do so. It has acted in good faith in that regard and that destroys any argument that the Territory will stand in the way of any Aboriginals getting hold of any piece of land in the Northern Territory. The clearest example of that is the town leases whereby the Northern Territory government has granted, free of charge, quite considerable areas in most of the major towns in the Northern Territory to assist Aboriginals to come to grips with their problems of camping around towns.

Cobourg Peninsula, a very substantial and magnificent piece of the Northern Territory, by agreement with Aborigines, was vested in Aborigines and leased back to the Northern Territory Conservation Commission, if I understand it rightly. If not, it is operated by the board under the act.

In addition to that, following an unsuccessful land claim over part of the Sir Edward Pellew Islands at Borroloola, the Northern Territory government agreed that quite an area of land, including a number of islands of the Sir Edward Pellew Group, for which the Land Commissioner could identify no traditional owners, should be vested in Aborigines. The Northern Territory government recognised that there was an Aboriginal attachment even if it was not strong enough to meet the requirements of the Land Rights Act. It recognised that there was cooperation from Aborigines in the area.

In regard to the corridor for the lead-zinc deposit at McArthur River that, hopefully, will be developed one day, there was considerable cooperation during negotiations. The mining company gave land back from a pastoral lease it had. That land was passed on to the Aborigines in exchange for areas of land in their land claim so that a corridor to the coast and to the islands could be secured for the future. Any suggestion that the Northern Territory government simply goes out to thwart every possible Aboriginal claim to land is totally without foundation.

Mr Speaker, I wish to speak about crocodiles and put on record a concern that I have. Much has been said about crocodiles lately in terms of whether they constitute too great a danger to Territorians out in the bush and whether we should shoot out all the big ones. Certainly, shooting crocodiles is not the government's policy, as the minister has made very clear. The policy seems to be that if crocodiles are found in areas of human habitation, then they will be caught and taken to the crocodile farms. If they cannot be caught, and pose a real danger, probably they will be shot.

Darwin Harbour is an area that I have swum and dived in all my life, and which I have frequented with people who are like-minded. There is a concern, despite the number of crocodiles that have been taken out of Darwin Harbour, that it is still a dangerous place to swim or skin dive in and perhaps even to water-ski across. Whilst I accept the magnificent creature that a crocodile is and I would not want to see it exterminated - and it is a fantastic tourist asset - I think that, when it comes to very popular bathing areas, man has to exercise great control over other creatures on this earth that would eat him. Crocodiles of a reasonable size are seen in the vicinity of Mindil Beach, almost metres from flash accommodation at the casino. That is getting pretty close to home because people use that beach. Certainly, crocodiles have been seen in other areas of Darwin Harbour where yachtsmen live on permanently moored yachts. They have been seen at Mandorah. Quite a large crocodile was caught there recently after several attempts.

I commend the Conservation Commission for its attempts and efforts to contain the problem, but I am saying that, in this town, with a magnificent harbour which is very well-used by water sports people, it would not surprise me to hear of somebody being taken by a crocodile, at almost any time and almost anywhere in the harbour. I do not wish to be a scaremonger, nor do I wish to be taken by a crocodile. To my knowledge, there has not been a crocodile attack in Darwin Harbour for many years. Certainly, there have not been any recently, but people use our harbour in ever increasing numbers nowadays. Some of the big crocodiles are proving very elusive. Officers of the Conservation Commission have been trying to trap some of them for a year or more. Traps have been set but they cannot catch some of the known big ones



around the harbour. They could be anywhere in the harbour; I am sure the big ones could swim 5 or 10 miles comfortably in a few hours, particularly with the tide that runs at 4 knots. A crocodile could be at one end of the harbour and swim down to the other end in 4 hours. Who knows where they are lurking? If there is an attack, there will be a cry for some very strong action, and I would like to place my view on record that, in places like Darwin Harbour, man should exercise his superiority to this animal and ensure that people can frequent the harbour in safety.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, first I would like to speak on 2 matters that the honourable member for Fannie Bay raised.

Crocodiles are of some concern to me, living in Nhulunbuy as I do. I appreciate the member for Fannie Bay's discomfort at the thought of possible confrontation with one of these beasts. Crocodiles are removed from various parts of my electorate quite regularly. It has been put to me that, if a crocodile is removed, that creates an ecological hole which another beast will move into. Consequently, it is very difficult to know whether or not we should keep moving crocodiles so that others can move into that ecological hole. It might be in a river system, a bay or wherever. If there is food there, a crocodile will move into it.

Short of shooting the crocodiles out, I would suppose that the only real way of controlling them would be to take all the food away. In that case, they would not be there because there would be nothing there for them to eat. I think that that would be as unfortunate as shooting them all out. Following recent alarms in Nhulunbuy, Mr Galarrwuy Yunupingu, the Chairman of the Northern Land Council, addressed himself to the subject of living with crocodiles in our local paper, the Arnhem Courier. The article may have had some circulation in the NT News. The points he made need to be borne in mind if people are going to live in the Northern Territory and accept that crocodiles are part of the landscape. We have to learn to live with them as we have had to learn to live with traffic and many other hazards created by our modern society. Probably Aboriginal people have had to live with many hazards within their traditional society.

I think it is something that we will have to learn to live with but, obviously, we must exercise great caution. I appreciate that it will probably cost us some of our leisure activities, such as skin diving, water-skiing or whatever. I can remember some terrifying stories in Nhulunbuy about people water-skiing. My brother-in-law told me a story about an occasion when he was driving a boat towing a skier who had a parachute. The skier was aloft and started to point at the water. My brother-in-law assumed that the fellow with the parachute wanted to come down so he slowed the boat. In fact, he was pointing at a crocodile. The poor skier skidded across the water - he was trying to run across it - to escape the monster. That must have been a terrifying experience for that poor fellow.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are solutions other than shooting out the beasts. The solution of shooting out crocodiles or totally eradicating them in some way would have the same credence as killing all snakes. Those are totalitarian answers. We have to provide solutions rather than making the crocodiles conform to our requirements. We have, in some way, to adapt ourselves to living in the same environment. I appreciate that they must be controlled, but total control is not achievable without completely destroying the species. But even if it were achievable, I do not know that it would be desirable.

Another matter that the member for Fannie Bay raised was that of the Northern Territory government's involvement in various land claims. I appreciate the member's information that the Northern Territory government was not involved at all in 2 claims that proceeded. I was unaware of that fact until this evening. Whilst I accept the member's word on that, I would certainly like to hear the history of those claims, find out why there was no NT government involvement in them, and what peculiar or particular circumstances surrounded them that precluded any NT government involvement.

The member mentioned, quite correctly, that one cannot go to the High Court to seek an opinion, that litigation must be involved. There must be a contest or dispute that requires a decision. However, as I am sure all members are aware, land claims are not heard by the Land Commissioner in the context of litigation. They do not involve defendant and prosecution as it were.

Submissions and facts are placed before the Land Commissioner who evaluates the details put forward by representatives of the Aboriginal claimants. Generally, the various land councils represent the claimants. In fact, there is no legal reason why the NT government should make submissions to the commissioner other than on matters of detriment and 1 or 2 other aspects. The Aboriginal people feel, with a degree of justification, that some of the cases that have been put before the Aboriginal Land Commissioner by the Northern Territory government have been less than sincere. The government's motivation has been obscure, to say the least, certainly in the view of the Aboriginal claimants.

I appreciate that the Northern Territory government has granted Territory title to certain persons living on Cobourg Peninsula, with a lease-back arrangement for the national park there. I wholeheartedly congratulate it on that because it was a very successful episode in the Northern Territory's history. However, I remember an event which occurred not so long ago and which caused me great concern. I am sure that it caused many Territorians, Aboriginal and European, great concern. That was, of course, the controversy which was inspired by the Northern Territory government in relation to the handing over of Ayers Rock. It was inspired for political reasons. I know that Aboriginal people are extremely concerned about the actions that this government is prepared to take for nothing more than political motives.

These are genuine fears held by Aboriginal people. I certainly hope - and from the words of the Minister for Community Development today, I feel that there is some cause to hope - that we can get rid of the politics of confrontation. I think that there is a great deal of hope for a united community within the Northern Territory, but I can also understand why Aboriginal people are very reserved about taking the words of this government into their hearts overnight. Because of what has happened and what has been done to them over an extended period of time, they will need to be convinced. Whilst I appreciate the advice from the member for Fannie Bay, I can still understand the very genuine fears of Aboriginal people living within my constituency. I am sure that those fears would be held widely among Aboriginal Northern Territorians.

Another matter which affects my constituents is the horrendous cost of third-party insurance within the Northern Territory. My constituents are not only fortunate that they have the lowest road death toll in the Northern Territory, they are also extremely fortunate in having the lowest number of third-party claims. They insist, and I believe there is ample justification for their claims, that the only reason they pay such high third-party rates

is because of the escalating road carnage in other parts of the Northern Territory. They find it hard to understand, living as they do in isolation in the far reaches of Arnhem Land, why they should be obliged to contribute financially as a result of the damage which other Northern Territorians cause to themselves. The average motorist in Nhulunbuy cannot drive into the rest of the Northern Territory where he may need the protection of that third-party insurance. I would hope that the Treasurer would review the costs of third-party ...

Mr Manzie: You are being stupid. What is third-party for? It is for the protection of any other person involved in any ...

Mr LEO: I hear from the acting Treasurer, who obviously has some knowledge of third-party insurance, that there is some reason why another scheme cannot work. I can assure him that at Weipa in Queensland another scheme does work. It allows persons with vehicles registered in Weipa to have a third-party rate fixed which recognises the cost of third-party insurance within their community, but which would not apply should they leave Weipa. That is, if the vehicle is taken out of that community, the state rate must be paid.

I would ask the Treasurer to review the application of third-party insurance because it does apply to registered vehicles throughout the Northern Territory, as the minister has said. I would ask him to have a look at how many claims there are, not only from Nhulunbuy but also Galiwinku, Angurugu, Umbakumba and all isolated communities. Let him have a look at the number of claimants in those places in relation to the rates that the people living there pay. Quite clearly, people in isolated communities are disadvantaged because our contribution to the level of road carnage in the Northern Territory is miniscule compared to that in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and all of the places along the great Stuart Highway corridor, which is nothing less than a death trap.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to a matter that has been exercising my mind for the last 2 weeks of these sittings. I have been attempting to analyse the increasingly boisterous nature of the member for Stuart, the most noticeable increase in the frequency with which he addresses the Assembly, the number of debates that he becomes involved in and, more noticeably, the gift he seems to have gained for interjecting in a most aggressive and often personal manner, denigrating members of the government, ministers and most honourable members of the backbench. The degree of personal innuendo and abuse has reached a fairly high level. His derogatory comments have caused a great deal of concern in the Assembly so much so that the member for Arafura was moved to get to his feet last week and draw the Assembly's attention to it.

On Tuesday, I reflected on the negative attitude of opposition members. They are whingeing out of tune and they are not able to contribute in any constructive way to debate in the Assembly. They knock everything that is proposed by the government, regardless of its merit. I guess we all know that part of the reason for that is the opposition's total lack of policy, whether it be in economic areas or elsewhere. I have pointed out to the Leader of the Opposition on a number of occasions during these sittings that we are still waiting to hear about the magic economic policies that he said he would give to us within 3 weeks of the last sittings. We have all had a look at the Labor Party's platform and policy papers since they were updated following its last conference, and we realise that it does not have any economic policies, educational policies or social policies. The opposition is totally bereft of

policies; it has none at all. We all know whose responsibility that is. It is the Leader of the Opposition's responsibility. His job is to guide the parliamentary wing and to develop policies.

It is absolutely clear to me now how all of these things fit together. I know why the member for Stuart is attempting to raise his profile in this Assembly with his outgoing attitude and his boisterous nature. We are seeing a classic example of a leadership challenge. Following the spill and the backstabbing just a few months ago, the telephone booth meeting of the parliamentary wing and the battle between the 3-member pro- and anti-Collins factions, it became clear that the matter under debate was not the likelihood of the member for Arafura entering the Senate. The real concern was, and this has been told to me by people who move within that electorate, from the Tiwi Islands to Jabiru, that there is no doubt at all that the member for Arafura will not be re-elected. His electorate has moved against him and this is recognised not just by myself but by his colleagues.

His colleagues realised that it was not a matter of the Senate because they knew that the lefties who support the non-performing Senator Robertson had the fate of the member for Arafura sealed. The Labor Party in the Northern Territory is controlled now totally and absolutely by the left-wing union movement, the greenies and all those sorts of people. We realise now that it was thought that the interim leader, the member for Millner, would possibly be able to hold the fort until such time as a replacement came along. Unfortunately, as all members who are present here tonight would agree, there is no way that the opposition will have as many representatives as it has now following the next election which will mean that there will be even fewer members from which to choose a long-term leader.

This has provided the opportunity for the ambitions of the member for Stuart, as is evidenced by this increased profile. Obviously, when the member for Stuart becomes Leader of the Opposition - and there is no doubt in my mind that he will because, even if he is making no sense, he is certainly making a lot more noise than the present Leader of the Opposition in this Assembly - there will be the question of who will become deputy leader. Honourable members may have puzzled about that too. I have not been wasting my time and I have thought about it. The member for Arnhem, a very astute gentleman, certainly does not adopt nearly as many negative attitudes as his colleagues. In fact, he performed extremely well today and I give him full credit for that. He has been on his feet at least 3 times today and that is commendable. Therefore, it is quite clear to me that therein lies the solution to the deputy leadership problem.

It is a pity that the member for Stuart and the member for Millner could not remain in the Assembly this evening because I was quite keen to judge their reactions to my comments. I felt that I might leave the subject until next Tuesday but, in all fairness to the member for Millner - who is the only Darwin-based member of the opposition - I felt that he should be made aware of the challenge that confronts him. Whilst he made considerable play today about leadership in the Liberal Party, all honourable members present realise that the Liberal Party is not only solid but is working very constructively towards developing its policies and announcing them, unlike the local ALP opposition, so that everything will be in place when it takes government some time in the middle of next year. Whilst members of the opposition seem to get a bit of a giggle out of newspaper allegations about leadership, they should be concentrating on the problems in their own backyard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I shall not hold the Assembly any longer tonight. It is a pity that we could not get a reaction from members of the opposition but no doubt they will have the opportunity to demonstrate that next Tuesday. Members will have to wait with bated breath to see the outcome of these current moves.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr DALE (Community Development)(by leave): Mr Speaker, during debate in this Assembly on Thursday 20 November last week, whilst the honourable member for Arafura was speaking I interjected - and this is recorded on page 8A of the unrevised issue of Hansard - by saying: 'That is where they left a bit out of the report, mate'. Mr Speaker, I have subsequently listened to tapes of the debate on Wednesday 19 November to which I was referring in that interjection. I am quite happy that the comment that I thought was made at that time was not made until a few moments later and is in fact recorded in the Hansard of Wednesday 19 November. I want to make it known that in no way do I reflect on the accuracy or the efficiency of the staff in the Hansard section.

#### DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE Trade Development Zone

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

Dear Mr Speaker,

I wish to propose, under standing order No 94, that this Assembly discuss this morning, as a definite matter of public importance, the failure of the Northern Territory government to adequately protect the interests of the Territory taxpayer in the establishment and operation of the Trade Development Zone.

Terry Smith,  
Leader of the Opposition.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the government has made much ado in the last few days about a file that has apparently been missing from the Trade Development Zone. The alleged missing file has been of sufficient importance for a police investigation to be launched. The interesting thing is that the alleged missing and important file has been missing since April and it is only in the last few days that, for some reason, it has become important.

What we are here today to talk about is not the alleged missing file but what is missing from the Trade Development Zone. What is missing from the government's approach to the establishment of the Trade Development Zone is prudent financial management of the taxpayer's dollar. There has been no cost benefit analysis of the plans for the Trade Development Zone. There was no comparison of any alternative investment possibilities for the money being consumed at such prodigious rates by the Trade Development Zone. There was no economic model developed to measure the flow-on to the wider community. These are the elements that are missing from the Trade Development Zone and it is a sad fact that these key elements are, of course, not on any files at the Trade Development Zone, which is where they should be.

Before the government launched the Trade Development Zone, it should have undertaken detailed studies on the return to the public from the investment of vast sums of taxpayers' money. It has done it for the railway, and the

government's decision on whether it will participate in that project will be made on the basis of a 138-page feasibility study. That study was compiled by the Railway Executive Group which was comprised of highly-paid and highly-qualified staff who laboured long and hard to produce something which could be used as a basis for a government decision. Of course, that is the correct and appropriate process by which the government should make all its investments. Where is the comparable study to establish the feasibility of the Trade Development Zone? There is none.

We have already seen in other areas the cost of not undertaking these feasibility studies. I will just give one brief example: tourism. The failure to undertake proper feasibility studies in tourism is costing the Territory taxpayer \$27m this year, and with no end in sight. It is clear that this same casual approach to the investment of taxpayers' money is being repeated in the Trade Development Zone exercise.

Yesterday, following an invitation from the minister responsible, the Deputy Opposition Leader and myself had a briefing at the Trade Development Zone. We found a number of interesting things. First of all, we were informed that the zone does not expect to return an annual operating surplus until years 12 to 14; that is, expenditure on the zone will be greater than income for each of the first 12 years of its life. To put it another way, the Territory will be subsidising the zone for the next 10 to 15 years. This year alone, we will be spending \$9m of taxpayers' money on the zone. Obviously, that amount will increase over the next 10 years. We are looking at least at \$100m in the next 10 years, and the government is saying that it will subsidise the zone over that period of time. We are not saying, of course, that none of that \$90m will be recovered. What we are saying is that the government has entered into an arrangement whereby, in each of the next 12 years, it will supplement the zone's income from its own resources. That is something that I do not think the public realised or expected. The budget papers indicate that, with a government contribution to the zone of \$9m, the return is expected to be \$20 000 this year.

The second interesting thing that we picked up is that we will never recover, at a real interest rate, the funds that were spent on capital costs in the zone. Of course, the government will argue that, over a period of time, the capital costs involved in building warehouses will be repaid by rent and other things. The point is that, if you take account of real interest rates in that calculation, there is no way known that the government will get back its money. That is a direct government subsidy to the private investors in the zone. It adds up to a sum of \$13m at present.

We have further heard that there are still no fully-developed financial projections concerning the viability of the zone. We have spent \$30m on capital works, we have determined the level of incentives and subsidies for at least the first 12 firms, and yet we have no idea whether these decisions will make it easier, harder or impossible to achieve some sort of economic viability for the zone. Decisions have been without reference to overall goals or objectives for the zone. This is despite the fact that, in this Assembly on 13 November, the minister stated that such a set of financial projections was available. We heard yesterday that those financial projections are not available and that they will not be available until they are presented to the Trade Development Zone Authority in December this year.

Mr Hatton: They are available, but not to you.

Mr SMITH: Well, that is very nice. They are available, but not to us, despite that fact the minister said in this Assembly on 13 November that we could have them. If that is the case, the minister has deliberately deceived this Assembly, and he had better explain himself in his response.

The minister also does not know what is going on in the Trade Development Zone. We were specifically told that those financial projections were not finished and they would not be completed until the time the Trade Development Zone Authority next met, which will be in December this year. That is at least 18 months after the Trade Development Zone has commenced its operation and at least 18 months after the Trade Development Zone should have had those financial projections ready. It is like going for a government loan halfway through building a house, and then working out whether you can pay it back again. I would not mind a small bet that it is only since we have been making statements on this matter and raising the problems that apparent in respect of the Trade Development Zone, that the government has actually started work on putting together a set of financial projections.

The very best that the government can offer us is to say that, in 10 to 15 years time, the zone might stop being a drain on the public purse. In January this year, the then acting Chief Minister, Mr Dondas, was quoted in the NT News as saying: 'Darwin's Trade Development Zone represents bright hopes for the future of secondary industry in the Territory and, hopefully, there will be at least 20 companies operating by November 1986'. That is today. We are in November now. We do not have 1 company operating in the Trade Development Zone, let alone 20. We do not even have 1 company which has signed a lease to operate in the Trade Development Zone. Remember those words, 'hopefully, there will be at least 20 companies operating by November 1986'. That is the problem with this government's approach to the Trade Development Zone: it is operated on hope, Mr Speaker.

The government has thrown money at the Trade Development Zone in the hope that it will work, in the hope that something will happen. It has provided no rational analysis. It has given no weight to any alternative ways of spending that amount of money. It has provided no study of the consequences of outside events that may impinge on the success of the Trade Development Zone. It is based on hope and it is hope which led it, in January this year, to anticipate that 20 companies would be operating by now. Hope now says that 1 company will be operating in February 1987. Hopes of that sort are not much of a basis for the investment of millions of taxpayers' dollars.

The opposition welcomed the establishment of the Trade Development Zone. We still believe the concept is sound. The opposition is supportive of the development of the Territory for the benefit of all Territorians. In my second-reading speech, I said it would probably take 10 to 15 years for the zone to come to fruition. I did not say that it would take 10 to 15 years of government subsidy. What was particularly interesting in my second-reading speech was the comment I made about the level of subsidies. I think it is important enough for me to read it into the record again:

I want to make one final point on that general subject. There is no point in offering artificial subsidies which, at some later stage, will be withdrawn. I place it on the record now that, if there are to be particular attractions offered to initial firms to get them into the Trade Development Zone, which will not be offered to firms later on, and if there are to be attractions offered to particular firms for a limited period of time, I think that is the wrong approach. We must be able to go out to these firms and say: 'We are



offering you a chance to establish a viable business in the Northern Territory under these sorts of conditions. We are not offering you artificial subsidies, and we are not offering to prop you up for a number of years. We want a viable business that can stand on its own feet under the concessions that will be offered to everyone without time restrictions in that Trade Development Zone'.

Those words remain true today. One of the major problems is the level of incentives that this government has given and its inability to control that level of incentives in the interests of the taxpayers of the Northern Territory.

Not only was the government casual in its initial investment decision, it has been very lax in its control of the expenditure of public moneys during the development of the zone to date. Let us look at the incentives offered to potential zone entrants. Of course, the government refuses to release details of the incentives it is making available to zone industries. We all know why: it is concerned at the complaints that will come from Territory manufacturers when they learn the size and extent of those incentive arrangements. We know about the type of incentives because they were mentioned by the minister in the debate on 13 November. They include free or reduced rent, payroll and stamp duty exemptions, relocation costs, training expenses and export freight subsidies. It is estimated that these subsidy arrangements will cost us \$0.5m this financial year for 1 firm that will commence operations in February and, perhaps, 1 or 2 others that are expected to start in April. The budget figures indicate we will receive \$20 000 in return.

We should be glad in one way that the hype of the former minister, now Minister for Transport and Works, has not come true, because how much would it have cost in zone allowances if his hopes had materialised and 20 companies were operating now? On the figures provided, it would appear that millions of dollars would have gone into subsidies in the form of zone allowances. We appear to be locked into a situation where the more firms that appear in the Trade Development Zone, the more money we lose. How many millions will be required for zone allowances in future years and what effect will that have on the viability of the zone? The minister might like to address that question. We do not know because the government will not supply the information.

That brings me to a related point. In his budget speech, the Treasurer said: 'There is no longer scope, Mr Speaker, for budget funds to be used to underwrite private development other than through the provision of government services and infrastructure'. The definition of government services and infrastructure must have been widened significantly if it can be taken to include incentives to firms in the Trade Development Zone. What is happening in the zone is against the stated policy of the government as outlined in the Treasurer's speech. Perhaps the Attorney-General, who is acting as Treasurer, might like to contribute to the debate and explain how that came about.

The opposition is concerned with the development of the Territory for all Territorians. All producers and developers in the Northern Territory deserve a fair go, but zone entrants will receive generous subsidies not available to other manufacturers and producers. For example, zone entrants will receive generous export freight subsidies. Does a Territory horticulturist seeking to establish an export industry for Territory produce get the Northern Territory government to foot part of his freight bill? No, but a Trade Development Zone manufacturer will. How much will the Northern Territory government pay for export freight subsidies to Trade Development Zone manufacturers? The honourable minister has said he does not want those figures to be publicly

known. He claims it would be a breach of commercial confidentiality for Territorians to know what percentage the government is prepared to pay of the export freight bill for businesses in the zone.

I leave it to the minister to explain to those established and growing Territory enterprises which are seeking export markets, why they do not get the export freight subsidy available to the zone occupants. Let the government explain why it is prepared to pay the freight for some companies but not for existing Territory enterprises, be they manufacturing or horticultural or whatever. Let the government explain to Territorians already here and operating and committing their own money without government assistance, why the taxpayer's dollar should pay the freight for new businessmen coming into the Northern Territory.

That is the problem once you start making secret deals for secret subsidies to the select few. Even between the zone occupants, equality is not a consideration in awarding differential incentive payments. We all know that some firms are getting better deals than others and it will be very interesting to see how that works out also. What we have is a government, which supposedly is committed to free enterprise and competition, awarding monopolies to a favoured few in the Trade Development Zone. Perhaps I should say that we have a government whose rhetoric supports private enterprise and competition but which allows the zone authority to decide as it chooses in awarding all sorts of government-funded business advantages.

Mr Speaker, very briefly, another area that demonstrates the Territory government's lack of accountability is in relation to the payment of consultants. We heard last week, on 13 November, an explanation of the consultancy provisions. The principal consultant, K.K. Yeung Management Consultants, receives \$162 000 per annum in retainers and supervision fees. On top of that, K.K. Yeung receives success fees. These success fees are quite funny. There are 2 sorts: a contact fee and a start-up fee. In order to receive what the government calls success fees, all K.K. Yeung has to do is to contact companies, get them to express interest in the Trade Development Zone and get them to sign letters of intent. The minister does not even know whether these letters are legally binding. Not only did he not know when we debated this matter on 13 November, he did not care. As recently as yesterday, he said that he had no information to the contrary.

It is not good enough for a minister of the Crown to have no information to the contrary when he is talking about public money and about commitments of government authorities which involve the spending of money. He should have a firm legal opinion which states exactly what those commitments are and exactly what the rights of the Trade Development Zone are. But no, Mr Speaker, only today we have heard from the minister that he will seek legal advice, and it is not before time. It is something again that should have been done 18 months ago when the government was setting up the Trade Development Zone. In its own small way, it is an indication of the way the government has gone about the whole business of setting up the zone and its failure to ensure that the interests of the Territory taxpayer are protected.

It is all very well for this government to say that it has this magnificent new facility in the Territory and it wants businesses to come here. I can understand its anxiety and need to get businesses established, but it has gone overboard. It has failed to protect the interests of the Territory taxpayer and it has failed to set up proper accounting facilities that would ensure that that would happen.

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Technology and Communications): Mr Speaker, that is the biggest load of hogwash that has ever been delivered in this Assembly. If it proves one thing, it proves the total and absolute ignorance of the Leader of the Opposition. He has sought over recent weeks, in a quite vindictive campaign, to denigrate the chief overseas consultant of the Trade Development Zone, Mr K.K. Yeung.

Before I deal with the subject of K.K. Yeung, might I refer the Leader of the Opposition to the Hansard debate of 5 June 1985. I quote him: 'My main conclusion is that it will take a concerted effort on the part of the proposed Trade Development Zone Authority and the government of the Northern Territory to get this thing off the ground. It will be no easy matter and it will not happen by itself'. That is quite true, Mr Speaker.

I quote him again, in reference to the zone at Corby which he visited. He was speaking about the 2 reasons why Corby had succeeded: 'It has worked because it is in an excellent geographical position. Secondly, Mr Speaker, it has been blessed, in my view, with a high level of entrepreneurial ability on the authority's staff. If we get good people, and I am sure we will because there are good people around, we are off to a flying start'. Mr Speaker, he has not said it directly, but will the Leader of the Opposition, at some time during this debate, stand up and say that Mr K.K. Yeung is not a good person, because that is what he is insinuating in his public campaign of slander and denigration.

What the Leader of the Opposition has said in the past about the Trade Development Zone is quite true, and I would like to give one more quote: 'Hopefully, we can all say, in 10 to 15 years, that it has been one of the most farsighted things that this government has introduced. I conclude, as I began, on a note of warning which I think everybody shares. It will not happen on its own, but will only happen with hard work on the part of all those concerned'.

It pains me to say this, but I must reiterate that the only reason the Leader of the Opposition is raising the matter of the Trade Development Zone is to cover up his own inadequacies. It is a cheap political trick, a scaremongering campaign, to hide his own inefficiencies, to hide what is obvious to everybody who has been sitting in here for the last 6 sitting days: that the member for Stuart and the member for Arafura are running the member's office and running the Labor Party. Because of that, he has come up with this cheap political trick.

For the benefit of honourable members and for the Hansard record, I will now provide some information from the curriculum vitae of K.K. Yeung. His education comprises a general certificate of education from the University of London. He is a fellow of the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants and a past chairman of the Hong Kong Centre. He is a Fellow of the Association of Certified Accountants and a past council member of the Hong Kong branch. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries and Administrators. He is a Fellow of the Hong Kong Society of Accountants, and a Fellow of the Taxation Institute of Hong Kong.

I have met K.K. Yeung personally. I have visited his premises and I have watched him work. He is a very well-known and respected gentleman in Hong Kong. Men of such skill and reputation do not come cheaply. The Leader of the Opposition gave a misleading throwaway line about K.K. Yeung receiving \$162 000 in retainer fees, but he made no cost comparison and did not even attempt to put that in context. It shows him for what he is: a cheap

political trickster. I know, because I have seen the analysis and, on a time and cost basis, we could be paying a hell of a lot more to K.K. Yeung and his sub-consultants and staff to promote the zone.

Let us take it one step further. The Leader of the Opposition has attempted over the last 2 weeks to say that the results are not on the board. That is absolute and arrant nonsense. We have never said, for example, that a manufacturer will be operating in the zone by November this year. They were expected to commence moving in in November and to be operational in February. Let me remind the Leader of the Opposition of his own words: 'They will need a lot of entrepreneurial skill in the zone'. To my mind, they have got it. We have the world's best, in my view, in Asia. Someone of K.K. Yeung's reputation does not go out to investors or manufacturers in Hong Kong and say: 'We are on to a good thing here. Put your name down on this little bit of paper and I will get paid some money and you can have a bit'. That is what the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting. No, it does not work that way. I have said repeatedly in this Assembly that that is not the case at all. That is not the way it works. I have put it on public record but still the Leader of the Opposition persists.

Letters of intent are not signed. However, as I have already taken great pains to explain to the Leader of the Opposition, no commission is paid until a firm's business plan is approved by the board of the Trade Development Zone. The preparation of a business plan is indeed a very comprehensive task and the Leader of the Opposition knows that also.

I will retrace some of the history of the zone in order to highlight what a fantastic achievement it has been. We started talking about the zone in June and July of 1984 and it then began to materialise. An executive group carried out some of the surveys. An American consultant looked at Australia's taxation laws and export concessions. We covered all that, and we took a decision. Cabinet was constantly informed until August 1984 and the then Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Paul Everingham, tabled a statement in this Assembly on 28 August 1984 which virtually said that the zone would be established. The legislation for the zone was introduced into this Assembly on 24 April 1985. It is only a little more than 12 months since we introduced and passed the legislation in this Assembly.

What have we accomplished in those 12 to 14 months? The zone has taken shape and it is a quality zone. The effort has certainly not been wasted. What is constantly ignored and overlooked by the Leader of the Opposition is that \$4.5m has been spent on capital works including roads, sewerage and water supply. That fits in with the plan of the government to develop that whole area. It involves the fishing industry and another harbour. Those plans have been spoken about briefly by other ministers but that is never recognised by the Leader of the Opposition. It is interesting to note the reason for that. It is not mentioned because it does not suit his pathetic argument that fits in with political tricks.

Mr Smith: It does not suit your argument to answer the questions either.

Mr HANRAHAN: The opposition members are knockers as far as I am concerned and have achieved absolutely nothing for this Territory. In fact, it would be an understatement to say that they are non-Territorian.

What about Yulara and the Sheraton hotels? What about their biggest furphy, the Alice Springs to Darwin gas pipeline? What about the inclusion of Kakadu stage 2 on the World Heritage List, uranium mining and the development

of our airports? What does the opposition do? Knock, knock, knock! And why, Mr Speaker? I will tell you why. In 3 years in this Assembly, not one of the members opposite has ever stood up with a development plan, a strategy, a new policy or an initiative for the development of the Territory. The member for Stuart says: 'What about the cost benefit analysis? What about this feasibility study, what about that feasibility study?' We have taken the decision on information known to the government at the time. We are proud to have made that decision and we will stand by it because the zone will work.

Much play has been made about the lead time taken by businesses to come into the Territory and set up. Let us just run through some of the people who have signed as a show of good faith. The Leader of the Opposition would know nothing about the significance of saving of face or loss of face to an Asian investor. He proves that every time he stands up. I have a good mind to take him to Hong Kong and show him how the real world works.

We made contact with a knitwear business in October 1985. The company is due to set up in the zone in February 1987. We are currently holding discussions with that company. There is another clothing manufacturer. We made contact with a watch manufacturer in October 1985. At this stage, they are scheduled to come in April 1987 and June 1987 respectively. There are also manufacturers of jewellery, bed sheeting, confectionery, video, plastics, watches, canning, electrical water heaters and plastic bags - all new industries to the Territory. They are capable of creating 217 jobs in the zone. The Leader of the Opposition wants to knock what I think is about halfway between an optimistic and conservative view, that the flow-on effect of those industries will create an additional 600 jobs or more in other industries.

We have all heard the opposition say that local manufacturers will be damaged by the zone and the government is doing nothing for them. Any fool knows that that is not the case. These manufacturers are totally export-orientated. The major incentives under Commonwealth law apply to them.

Mr Smith: That is nonsense and you know it.

Mr HANRAHAN: It is correct.

Mr Speaker, we also give exemptions on stamp duty, sales tax and rental assistance, and quite rightly so. The Leader of the Opposition would have us believe that that exemption will last forever. That is not the case and I have said it to him repeatedly. Those types of incentives will be phased out, and the longest agreement covers a 3-year period.

When we initially promoted this zone, we held seminars for the local businesses and some 120 people attended. They were very supportive of the zone because like me - and unlike the Leader of the Opposition - they know that it will create jobs and it will create business for them. Their own businesses will expand. We have had discussions with 3 Darwin businesses interested in establishing an export market. We have made no secret that those businesses seeking to establish totally for the export market will receive every assistance from the Trade Development Zone and the Northern Territory government. It is a furphy that we are not supporting local businesses and and I am becoming sick and tired of furies.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the missing file. He said that it was found to be missing in April. Let me tell the Leader of the Opposition what I told him yesterday. It did go missing between April and July. In

relation to the file, we were not aware that the information was in the public arena until I received the 28 questions from the Leader of the Opposition. It was patently obvious that one of the questions contained information that was within the file. It was from one of the letters of intent, from one of the commercially sensitive files. These files are very sensitive indeed. There never has been any question about how damaging that information can be to other investors in the zone if used in the public arena.

Mr Speaker, I asked that that question be withdrawn. It is interesting to note that that request was acceded to but, by various means, the matter has still been raised in the public arena. I have mentioned that the Chairman of the Trade Development Zone is overseas at this moment, trying to allay the fears of K.K. Yeung and others because of the despicable campaign that has been mounted by the Leader of the Opposition in his pursuit of cheap political points. He has sought to denigrate the zone and to put it in jeopardy. That is what will happen because we are dealing with sensitive people who respect the principles of business, one of which is confidentiality. I know, and the Leader of the Opposition knows, that he has not been completely honest. He has had access to information, and it is information to which I would give much credence.

What is called for here is a little propriety rather than cheap political tricks. The Leader of the Opposition would be well advised to take note of one of the clauses contained within a contract of employment for employees of the zone. It appears on page 4 of the contract:

The employee shall not, either during the term of his or her employment under this agreement or thereafter, except in the proper course of performing his or her obligations hereunder, divulge to any person whosoever and shall use his or her best endeavours to prevent the publication or disclosure of any secret, design, plan or any information concerning the business or finances of the employer or any of its dealings, transactions or affairs which may come to his or her knowledge during the performance of his or her obligations hereunder.

The Leader of the Opposition has made great play during the week about rumours that are circulating. He has obtained his information from rumours. I would have thought that any honest Leader of the Opposition who wanted to be held in public regard would not involve himself in discussions with former employees of the zone who may or may not have left under the best of circumstances and who had, for any reason whatsoever, an intent to ensure that rumours circulated and that the zone did not receive the respect due to it - in other words, somebody whose purpose might be to deliberately denigrate the zone. I would expect that anybody in a position of public respect and authority would not enter into those discussions and use them for cheap political tricks. But I know, and the Leader of the Opposition knows, that that is not the case. You may well laugh.

Mr Smith: Do I have to get your permission to do that?

Mr HANRAHAN: I have a letter from the Leader of the Opposition, Suite 15, Star Village, Smith Street Mall, Darwin. It is to a former employee of the zone:

Dear David,

Thank you for your assistance in relation to the Trade Development Zone.

As yet there has been no parliamentary opportunity to query the government on peculiar arrangements in the Trade Development Zone, but you may be assured the issues will be pursued by the opposition at the earliest opportunity.

I would be very interested to hear from you about any Australian companies that considered establishing in the Trade Development Zone. In particular, I am interested in any known reason why Australian companies are not as yet involved in the Trade Development Zone.

If you would prefer to telephone rather than write, please do not hesitate to reverse the charges, either to myself or Mike Scott on 817666.

Yours sincerely,  
Terry Smith.

That is despicable! The Leader of the Opposition knows of the rumours that are circulating and he has fuelled them. He has made public statements and he has been listening to rumours. The Leader of the Opposition has been talking to someone who may have a deliberate intent to malign the zone and he has played right into his hands. This is nothing more than a scaremongering, cheap political exercise to cover up for his own inefficiencies. I am mad, because that sort of activity makes me very angry. I table the letter.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, we have not so far had a response from the government on this matter of public importance that has been raised. All we have had is a re-run of a 1982 Apex debate. The bit of press publicity the minister got overseas seems to have gone to his head.

He made an incredible charge about cheap political tricks. He is the minister who last week engaged in what would be the cheapest political trick that we have seen in this Assembly for many months. He took umbrage over a file which disappeared in April. He claimed that it went missing between April and June. Did he go to the police force between April and June and say: 'The missing file contains extremely sensitive information which we cannot have getting out into the marketplace. We want you to conduct an investigation'. No, he did not. He waited until a couple of weeks ago when the matter got into the public arena. The minister then involved the police force of the Northern Territory in one of the cheapest political gimmicks that I have seen for many months.

He argues that the operators - and that is what they are - in Hong Kong and throughout South-east Asia, who are interested in coming into the Trade Development Zone, do not know what is going on and what is being offered. That shows that the minister does not know how business is conducted in South-east Asia. It is absolutely ridiculous. Of course they know what is being offered to other people who are entering the zone. They get together. They work it out and they discuss how they can extend what is being offered.

We do not know about Mr K.K. Yeung's personal character. We have not been stating that there is anything wrong with his personal character. What we know about Mr K K Yeung is that obviously he is a clever businessman. He has

run rings around the Northern Territory government. He has been able to get a deal which other businessmen in South-east Asia would give their eye teeth for. Nobody else has had a deal as good as this since the days when the government was flogging off everything for tourism. He has a deal which is in the grand tradition of deals with the Northern Territory government, dating back to the Everingham days. We are not knocking his personal character. We are saying that he is a pretty good businessman. He has shown up the Northern Territory government for what they are: a mob of Rambo cowboys who go in with their money bags, start spreading them around town and are very quickly ripped off.

Let me turn to this idea of scheduling which the minister was talking about. He stated that there was no intention that firms would be operational in November. They would just be moving in at that time and they would be operational in January. Let us have a look at some of the press statements about that. In the Northern Territory News of 23 October 1985, the then minister, Mr Dondas, said that there would be 20 manufacturing companies in the zone by the opening date of November 1986. On 31 December 1985, in the Northern Territory News, he said that the first user would be in the zone by November 1986. As we proceed, we notice that the statements become a little less definite and a little more rubbery. By January 1986, it was being said that warehousing services would be in place by November and, hopefully, there would be at least 20 companies operating in the zone by then. By April, K.K. Yeung was saying that government representatives had said that 15 Hong Kong firms were expected to invest \$10m in the Territory by the end of 1986. By September of this year, the Trade Development Zone Authority was talking about February 1987. In September, Mr McHenry stated that 12 companies would be starting in the zone in February 1987. Yesterday, we were told that there will only be 3 in February, 1 in April, a few more in June or July and a couple more in October. The figures that the government is providing are as rubbery as blazes. They do not stack up. The closer we get to the actual date, the more certain we are that events are not occurring.

In his speech, the minister stated categorically that nobody had been offered government subsidies or assistance that would extend beyond 3 years. That is not true. We have information that some companies have already been offered assistance extending over some 5 to 6 years. From experience of how this government operates, we know that it does not offer a subsidy to one firm as a pump-priming exercise and then move back. The first subsidy becomes the benchmark. Other companies come in and want more and more. Obviously, that is what is already happening with the Trade Development Zone. As I have said, the minister evaded the point. Throughout the whole fiasco of subsidised hotel development, we have seen how each subsidy becomes a benchmark with the next company wanting more. The minister set the limit at 3 years, but we know that subsidies are already extending over 5 to 6 years.

Let us be honest about what happened. The government decided that it would widen the economic base of the Territory economy and that was fair enough. It may have had some basic idea that it would expend some \$100m over the succeeding 10 years to achieve its aim. That is a large sum of money, but the concept was good. A number of options were available to the Northern Territory government. The horticultural industry could have been expanded. We could have worked on the further development of infrastructure, storage and transport to enable products to be moved to markets in South-east Asia or within Australia. The offshore service industry was another possibility: the provision of engineering, medical, architectural services and so on in South-east Asia. That proposal has been around for quite some time. Marine products is another area which the government could have decided to put money



into. It could have gone into land management technology, further development of the expertise we already have in the arid, tropic and savannah zones, and selling our technology in similar places throughout the world.

Having made its decision that manufacturing was the particular industry to be supported, there were various options which could have been considered. For example, the government could have helped to extend the capabilities of local manufacturers. In answer to a question this morning, the Chief Minister spoke about getting local manufacturers into South-east Asian markets. That is something we have always agreed with. The government could have said: 'We will provide incentives to local businessmen. We will work with local businessmen to find out why local manufacturing is not developing as fast as it could and to identify the constraints which are restricting our access to those markets'. It may have found that the problem was a lack of contacts at the other end. It could have made a decision to go into joint venture manufacturing involving people at the other end. That would have been a way of increasing the manufacturing base in the Northern Territory.

If the government decided, as it did, to encourage overseas firms to come to the Northern Territory, there were 2 possibilities open to it: the industrial park idea and the trade development zone idea. It is obvious that the government did not consider the range of options. It did not consider the various options and decide upon the most economic utilisation of the money. It simply said that it would go into manufacturing and the Trade Development Zone.

Obviously, it was something which took on a life of its own. No cost benefit analysis was done and no feasibility studies were done. It was a matter simply of the government saying: 'Let's have a go! We think we can do it'. As I said, members of the government are a mob of cowboy Rambos who jump on an idea, race it around until it becomes something that takes on a life of its own and off they go. They had no idea what it would cost. They still have no projections available. They still cannot tell us what it will cost, even though it is 18 months since the legislation was enacted. One would have thought that the groundwork would have been done before they started. But, 18 months later, they still cannot tell us what the project will cost. They have simply said that they will continue to chuck money into it with their eyes closed until they see what comes out the other end.

It is a complete blue sky investment which ranks with any other blue sky investment. The unfortunate thing about blue sky investments is that they normally offer the possibility of a high return. Therefore, some people have decided to include them in their investment portfolios. This government has invested in a project which has all the hallmarks of a blue sky investment, except the high return. The government still does not know the impact of any national moves against protection. It still cannot tell us what will happen if the natural advantage of businesses in the zone is reduced by a movement against protection. It has not been able to tell us whether it will have to increase its subsidies to offset those national moves. The whole project is so sensitive that the government may have no way of offsetting such national moves, apart from the use of subsidies.

Once again, the government has accused us of breaching confidentiality. It has tried to make out that we are engaged in a cheap political trick even though it has engaged in the cheapest political trick of the lot in the form of the police investigation. It has tried to disguise this trick with arguments about confidentiality. If I took every government file that was offered to me, I would have to charge the government archive storage space.

There are many public servants who are absolutely terrified at the way this government is operating. Their worry is that they have to make a decision between the Territory that they love and the jobs that they work in. What they are saying is that this government is hopelessly incompetent and is not following any of the standard procedures for making economic decisions about projects that it wishes to develop. It has no means of making a decision between one type of project and another. All that this government has done is grab \$100m of taxpayers' money, shove it in its back pocket, close its eyes and take a great leap into the unknown. Eyes closed, over the cliff, away we go! Hope it will be all right - you never know your luck when you reach the other end! All the government found was that Mr K.K. Yeung and associates were waiting there with their arms open to catch it and say: 'Thank you very much'.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, this morning, the opposition brought on what it referred to as a matter of definite public importance: 'the failure of the Northern Territory government to adequately protect the interests of Territory taxpayers in the establishment and operation of the Trade Development Zone'. During the luncheon adjournment, I have tried to find the basis of the opposition's arguments. However, in the speeches of both members opposite, it was almost impossible to find anything more than innuendo and allegations.

I will deal with that in more detail but, for the benefit of this Assembly, it would be worth while to review the history of the development of the Trade Development Zone. It started in 1983 when the then Chief Minister, Hon Paul Everingham, was in the United States and took the opportunity to inspect some foreign trade zones. As a matter of interest, the foreign trade zones are the last of the continuing initiatives introduced as part of the Roosevelt New Deal in the United States in the 1930s. They were so successful that they have developed under various titles around the world.

A task force was formed to examine the possibility of forming a free trade zone, a foreign trade zone or a trade development zone in the Northern Territory. It was formed in March 1984 or thereabouts. The report of that task force was tabled in this Assembly on 24 August 1984. I happen to have a copy here and I am sure honourable members opposite have read it, because they spoke extensively and glowingly about the proposal for the Darwin Trade Development Zone. The report set out the basis and the rationale for the formation of this zone. Legislation was introduced into this Assembly in April 1985 and debated in June 1985. For the benefit of honourable members, allow me to quote the words of the now Leader of the Opposition as recorded on page 944 of the Hansard of 5 June 1985: 'Mr Speaker, I rise to indicate the opposition's full support for this excellent piece of legislation and I do so without reservation'.

Mr Smith: There is nothing wrong with the legislation. I tried to tell you that.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the member said at a later stage:

Mr Speaker, as I have said, the opposition supports the objectives outlined in the bill. Since the bill was introduced, I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to see a couple of similar but not identical areas in operation. My main conclusion is that it will take a concerted effort on the part of the proposed Trade Development Zone Authority and the government of the Northern Territory to get this thing off the ground. It will be no easy matter and it will not

happen by itself. I am pleased to say that that note of realism is shared by the Northern Territory government officers whom I have spoken to and the Northern Territory government itself.

It is quite clear that, at that stage, the member for Millner recognised that the government would have to take some initiatives and offer some incentives to get this zone off the deck and working. Let me just go a bit further, because the legislation is worth examining.

In part III of the act, headed 'Functions and Powers of the Authority', section 15 says: 'The authority is empowered to administer such schemes, including schemes of assistance, as the minister refers to it ...' and to '... make assessment of the needs of industry and persons carrying on business or proposing to carry on business in the Trade Development Zone'. That legislation was unreservedly supported by the Leader of the Opposition. It clearly recognises that incentives will be offered and that those incentives will be at the discretion of the authority within the guidelines outlined by the minister.

I also refer honourable members to the tabled document of August 1984. On page 73 of that document, item 9 lists proposed incentives. They are wide-ranging: a one-charge system, exemption from payroll tax and stamp duty, availability of customs agency, availability of serviced industrial and commercial land on flexible terms, cash flow benefits of advances from the zone management body to meet repayable customs duties, centralised security to facilitate customs approvals and a centralised vehicle for pursuing all government approvals.

In addition, zone users were to be eligible for the normal range of NTDC benefits, provided that they met NTDC assistance criteria. These benefits include establishment expansion grants, removal and relocation assistance, industrial design assistance, industry housing assistance, loans or guarantees, research and development and invention assistance schemes. A wide-ranging package of incentives and opportunities were therefore to be made available to businesses in the proposed zone. The document was put before this Assembly and supported by the opposition in August 1984 and complemented by legislation that provided for the authority to carry out those functions. That is stated quite clearly in the act and was supported unreservedly by the opposition through the now Leader of the Opposition. There is no doubt that everybody was then aware that money would need to be put up front. It was known that the zone would not pay for itself initially. Incentives were to be offered to get businesses into the zone and considerable effort would be required to get the project off the deck. That was quite a reasonable position because it was the experience in starting up every one of these zones around the world. They work quite successfully around the world because they pick up and they take off.

I will quickly go through some of the opposition's arguments. It said that there was no cost benefit analysis of the plans of the Trade Development zone. That is true. There are costings relating to the provision of infrastructure at the zone. It is impossible to do a full cost benefit analysis until it is known who is in the zone and what they are producing. I might make a fundamental point here. It is all very well to ask now why a cost benefit analysis was not done 2 years ago and why there was no comparison of alternative investment possibilities. If the opposition has been so concerned why, in all the debate and discussion during the past 2 years, did it never once suggest that those things should be done? The government never implied that they had been done. Quite realistically, the opposition knew

that it would cost money to set up the zone, it would take time to become established and, eventually, it would pay its way. How soon that happens depends on the rate at which industries move into the zone. The rate of development of that zone will determine the rate at which it takes off.

Judging from his statement, the Leader of the Opposition seems to have some curious mathematical theories. I found this particular example which I will quote from the rushes of Hansard: 'This year alone, we are going to be spending \$9m of taxpayers' money on the zone. Obviously, that amount will increase over the next 10 years'. He is saying to the community that this zone will cost at least \$100m in the next 10 years.

Mr Speaker, we are spending \$9m this year, but that includes the construction costs incurred on roads, power, water, sewerage and the initial buildings. What he is saying is that, year after year, we are going to rebuild the roads, rebuild the sewerage system and put in new water and electrical reticulation. He says that we are going to lose about \$10m a year for 10 years. Then, all of a sudden, through some magical clicking of the fingers and waving of his arts-led wand, he says that we will suddenly turn this into a profit. I do not know how he thinks this will be achieved. He says we will lose \$10m a year for 10 years and then suddenly make a profit. That is mathematical lunacy.

Mr Ede: Losing and spending are 2 different terms.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I can only read his words.

Mr Smith: You cannot even do that by the sound of it.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, he said that even when we do get a return on the investment, our initial capital costs will not be covered. I can tell the honourable member that our cash flow projections, the very ones that are yet to go to the authority for final approval, indicate that the actual costs of operating the zone, as distinct from the cost of operating the authority, will break even or start producing a surplus after 3 years of operation. There will be additional cost because, over the period, the Trade Development Zone Authority will be working as an industry development department. It will be out there marketing, promoting and trying to attract businesses to expand the zone. Those indirect costs will be additional costs to the authority outside the specific operations of the zone. Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition is saying that those businesses which are in the zone should be paying the costs of promoting the zone to attract other businesses to it. If we were running a company, there might be some logic in that, but we are talking about government and industry development.

If we followed the Leader of the Opposition's theory and carried out a cost benefit analysis on everything government did, I would suggest that we would close down every hospital in the Northern Territory. We would close down the Department of Primary Production, the Department of Mines and Energy and Nortrade. In fact, we would close down government. The fact is that the government collects money from the community and uses it for the long-term benefit of the community. With that money, the government is creating jobs and a future for the people of the Northern Territory. That basic function is anathema to opposition members who want to spend the money on their arts-led recovery. That is the only initiative that the Leader of the Opposition has put up all year. All year, he has spoken about releasing a new policy on this or that within a couple of weeks, but the only suggestion he has come up with to help the Territory's economic recovery is an arts festival. He can go to

his arts festival and we will build the Territory. He will need his arts festival, because he will never get into government with that sort of theory.

The member for Stuart asked why we had not looked at alternative industries. He asked why we had not put the money into supporting other businesses. He seems to have forgotten something called the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority which is spending millions of dollars to develop our primary industries, agricultural and horticultural, and our plant nurseries. He seems to have forgotten the Department of Primary Production's research and extension development surveys and the work of the Department of Lands in opening up and expanding land for primary sector industries. He seems to have forgotten that the Department of Mines and Energy opened up areas for mineral exploration under great stress from the opposition and the federal government who worked in collusion to keep miners out of tenements in the Northern Territory. All these government instrumentalities, ranging from the Small Business Advisory Service to the Department of Mines and Energy, exist to promote the development of industry in the Northern Territory and are backed up by Nortrade which is out there finding markets for products and supporting local industry in its market development. The opposition would not know about that; it is anathema to its fundamental theories.

On the information that we have, I say that this zone is working and will continue to work. It will cost money to set up, but we are proud to be putting money into this zone. In the first 9 years, we will be directly creating at least 2000 jobs in manufacturing industry in the Northern Territory. That will generate about another 4000 jobs in Darwin, and that figure is based on a very conservative multiplier effect of 2 to 1. In today's dollars, those 2000 workers will be injecting about \$35m a year from their own wages into the local economy and that will produce a lot of other jobs out there. That is without taking into account the work that small businesses and manufacturers outside the zone will get through supplying spare parts, stationery and a multitude of other things.

I need to make this last fundamental point on costs. Members opposite might be pleased to know we have built that zone at almost \$1m under budget.

TABLED PAPER  
Report of the Auditor-General on the  
Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the table the report of the Auditor-General on the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement for the year ended 30 June 1986.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney General): Mr Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney General): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report, and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Motion agreed to.

# MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

## Progress of the University College of the Northern Territory

Mr MANZIE (Education): Mr Speaker, the teaching program of the University College of the Northern Territory will commence in February next year. That occasion will be a very significant event in the history of the Northern Territory because Territory students, for the first time, will have access to a university in the Territory. The achievement of that situation has not been easy and it is regrettable that, even after the University College opens, Territory students will still not be on equal footing with students elsewhere in Australia. I will deal with that situation later during this address, but I would first like to inform honourable members of present developments regarding the establishment of the University College.

Potential students have shown considerable interest in the University College. More than 700 inquiries have been received and, as of this morning, there have been 285 applications - 187 from Darwin, 33 from the rest of the Northern Territory, 21 from interstate and 44 from overseas. In other words, there are 220 Territorians among those 285 applicants. This demonstrates that the establishment of a university facility in the Northern Territory is far more than a local issue. It is something that has ramifications for the entire South-east Asian region. There will be a total of 62 staff employed at the University College when it begins operating next year. Of these, 24 will be academic staff and all but 1 have already been appointed. Interviews for the remaining position began last week.

Buildings which formally housed the Darwin general hospital are presently being refurbished to house the University College at a cost of \$6m. I can report that work is proceeding well and that the buildings will be ready for use in time for the University College opening in February.

Those are the nuts and bolts aspects of establishing a University College in the Northern Territory. Other issues that must be considered are those of recognition and funding and here the news is not as good. The bottom line is that, when the University College begins next year, the students who attend it will still not be on the same footing as those attending universities in capital cities elsewhere in Australia. That is simply because the federal government refuses to recognise that those students have the right to a university education in the Northern Territory.

Contrary to the continual protestations of the federal government and the Territory opposition, the issue is not simply one of funding and where the University College should be sited. It is a matter of the federal Labor government refusing to acknowledge that Territory students should have the same rights as those elsewhere in Australia. It has been said, repeatedly I might add, that the federal government would fund the University College if it were established at the Darwin Institute of Technology. That is not true. The federal government has never offered to fund a full University College at the Darwin Institute of Technology. The only offer the federal government has made is to fund a limited number of university subjects for up to 20 students at DIT next year. There would be funding for another 20 students during the following 2 years, rising to a total of 60 students over 3 years in a limited number of subjects. As I mentioned earlier, we have already attracted more than 4 times that number of applicants for next year alone. But the federal government is not interested in that statistic: it is 20 places next year or it is nothing.

That means that we will have an absolutely farcical situation in the Territory next year. We will have the situation where Territory students who are eligible for assistance under the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme, which is now known as Austudy, will not be able to receive that assistance if they attend the University College. The University College will be offering courses from the University of Queensland and they will be monitored by that institution so there is absolutely no question that the courses will be up to university standard. However, if Darwin students who would normally be eligible for Austudy decided to go to the University of Queensland, they would receive the assistance. The federal government would also fund 3 return air fares to enable them to travel to Brisbane to do the University of Queensland course. However, if those students decide they would rather stay in the Territory where their families and friends are, they will receive nothing even if they were doing exactly the same course that they would have taken in Brisbane. That can only be described as sheer bull-headed bloody-mindedness. The federal government would rather spend more money to try to force students to go interstate than recognise the University College of the Northern Territory and pay lesser amounts to the same students. That blind, unthinking attitude is what the Territory government has had to fight in trying to provide for university education in the Territory for Territory students.

The opposition has tried to run the line that the Territory government is rejecting federal funds because of the decision not to put the University College at DIT. What the Territory government has refused is a carefully worded invitation, which was actually more like a royal command, to remain under Canberra's colonial rule. I am not joking when I use the words 'royal command' because on this issue the federal government, and the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission in particular, has acted as though the Territory has absolutely no right to make its own decisions. The Chairman of CTEC, Hugh Hudson, not only refuses to recognise that all Territory students have a right to university education in the Territory but he also refuses to accept that the Territory government has the right to make decisions in this matter.

Mr Speaker, the Warden of the University College, the Secretary of the Department of Education and the Chairman of the Darwin Institute of Technology Council were in Canberra yesterday for discussions with Mr Hudson about issues concerning the University College. I can only say that I was utterly appalled and disgusted at the reception our representatives received. To be quite specific, Mr Hudson called several members of his senior staff to the meeting and, for an hour, subjected the party to a tirade of vilification against the Northern Territory government. During that shameful display, he accused Territorians of being, and I quote, 'snobbish', because we would not accept his offer of 20 university places at DIT. He went on to label the Territory government as, and again I quote, 'w.....s' for refusing the same offer.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That is disgusting.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I find that sort of behaviour nothing less than disgusting.

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I would not necessarily expect you to give a ruling on this matter at this stage, but I would like you to consider it. It is of concern to me that words are used which are grossly unparliamentary and, as a result, printed in the Parliamentary Record of the Assembly. Mr Speaker, once already in this session, you have ruled this word to be a completely unparliamentary expression. However, when members use such expressions under the guise of quoting someone else, the words still appear in the public record. Where offensive words are used, words which quite

realistically could be classified as bad language, I would ask that you to rule that the word or words be expunged from the public record of the Assembly.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I share the honourable member's repugnance at the word. It is a most offensive word, and the reason I have used it in this particular statement is because it was a disgusting reference. I also feel that the word has no place in the Parliamentary Record. However, I used it in this particular context to illustrate the abuse that was heaped on this government in front of members of a Territory delegation. I feel that it is appropriate to record the exact language used on that occasion.

Mr SPEAKER: I am advised by the Clerk that the Speaker has the right to expunge from the record any language or words which he regards as unparliamentary. In this case, I advise all honourable members that I will give the matter further consideration and report back at a later time.

Mr MANZIE (Education): Mr Speaker, as I said, I find that sort of behaviour to be disgusting as I am sure most honourable members would. It is even worse when we consider that this man is supposed to be a senior adviser to the federal government. It is appalling that a man in such a position should act in such an immature manner. He was incapable of negotiating. He could only act like a spoilt child because we did not do what he thought was best.

I am afraid that there is an even murkier side to this incident because Mr Hudson has not confined himself to sulking. Instead, he has done his best - or worst - to find ways in which he can punish Territorians for having the audacity to thwart his will. The federal government will not suffer from his action nor will Hugh Hudson and his Canberra mates. The Territory government will not suffer. No, the ones to suffer will be Territory students who are in no position to strike back.

Let me outline some of the devious little ways in which Mr Hudson is attacking the Territory. Firstly, any students at the University College who want to undertake any of their studies at DIT, even just 1 unit, will have to pay a \$250 administration fee to DIT. That means that those students will have to pay the \$250 twice because the University College Council has decided to levy the fee to keep its operations in line with tertiary institutions throughout Australia. Nowhere else in Australia are students who study at 2 tertiary institutions subjected to this discrimination.

That is not all. Where DIT students take part of their course at the University College, Hugh Hudson has said that CTEC will subtract the full cost of those units from DIT's funding even though the cost is being incurred by the University College. In turn, where University College students study some subjects at DIT, CTEC will also reduce DIT's funding by the full cost of those units.

The Territory delegation pointed out that arrangements between the University College and DIT would have caused no extra cost to either institution and therefore no extra cost to CTEC. I am afraid that Mr Hudson did not even use funding levels as his excuse. In fact, he left the delegation in no doubt that the actions were entirely punitive. To put it bluntly, Territory students in tertiary institutions are to suffer from vicious spite on the part of the Chairman of CTEC. There can be no excuse for this behaviour. It is totally inexcusable that the federal government or one of its minions should act in such a manner, motivated entirely by the wish to



cause maximum harm. Let there be no mistake: Mr Hudson and his minister deserve the full censure of every member of this Assembly. I will leave that issue now, although I can assure honourable members that the matter is anything but settled.

I would like to examine some of the opposition's arguments in support of putting the University College at DIT and I should point out that most of those arguments started in Mr Hugh Hudson's spiteful mind. I repeat that the federal government has never offered to fund a full university college at DIT. Its offer of 20 places is demonstrably inadequate and unacceptable. If the Territory government built the university college at DIT, it would cost nearly \$6m to be ready in 1987, although I must state quite categorically, that it could not be ready by then. More money would be needed after just 1 year. The \$6m would provide for free-standing laboratories and temporary accommodation for academic and administrative staff. By 'temporary accommodation', I mean the facilities would be barely sufficient to house academic and administration staff for one year. It does not take a genius to realise - and even the members of the opposition should appreciate this - that the cost of establishing at the DIT would escalate very rapidly. It is also apparent that the cost of that escalation would not have been borne by the federal government. Meanwhile, for \$6m we will get an excellent campus at Myilly Point, a campus which we will be able to extend in the future at minimal cost.

Let me return to the DIT issue and the opposition's suggestion that University College students will be able to use DIT facilities. That is a very interesting idea when you consider firstly that we are talking about an extra 150 to 200 students and, secondly, that the DIT's facilities are already strained to the absolute limit. The library, for example, seats a maximum of 200 students. It is barely adequate to meet the present demand, remembering that there are presently 8000 students at DIT. The present administration block is not, by any stretch of the imagination, adequate to handle present demands. Classes are being taught in dilapidated demountables. DIT has been crying out for a new block to house administration, computer and business management courses. Indeed, the federal government is now going to build one at a cost of \$7.7m.

However, it should be put on the record that the federal government stooped to using this project as a bargaining chip in the University College issue. When I went to Canberra to discuss the issue with the federal Minister for Education, I was told by a senior officer of her department that the project had been deferred for consideration in the 1988-90 triennium. This followed inferences from the chairman of CTEC, one Hugh Hudson, that the block would be built if the Territory government agreed to accept only 20 so-called university students at DIT. I draw some satisfaction, but not much, from the fact that the federal government was forced to cave in on this issue. Even though the University College will not be at the DIT, the federal government has been forced to allocate funds for the construction of the block in this financial year. That is simply because DIT is under so much strain that the new block is essential. So much for the suggestion that it would be able to cope with a university college as well.

There is another aspect of the DIT proposal which should be raised. That is the question of how a free-standing university college would fit on the DIT campus. The opposition has never bothered to mention the fact that the usable space at DIT is already limited because of cyclone surge zones and drainage from nearby suburbs. Nor has the opposition bothered to consider DIT's recent triennial submission which forecasts a capital works program based on the use

of much of the land which is available. The point I am making is simply that DIT does not have the facilities to cope with an influx of university students, nor does it have the space to cope with the addition of a free-standing university college. Even if it did have the space, building the University College at DIT would be more expensive than establishing it at the old Darwin Hospital site.

There is absolutely no sustainable argument for putting the University College at DIT. What makes this whole argument so ridiculous is that CTEC's own policy is that new universities are best established as university colleges of existing institutions. This policy was reiterated to me by the federal minister herself during our meeting in August. That means that the Territory government is proceeding in line with federal government recommendations. We only diverge because we insist on having more than 20 students in what will become the Territory's state university.

Members opposite might like to consider why an allocation of 20 students is unacceptable to the Territory government. It is not just because we already have more than 250 applications for the University College even though that in itself is clear proof that our argument is correct. The really telling point is that there are already 500 Territory students at interstate tertiary institutions and, despite this, the number of Territory students who undertake university study is unsatisfactory, particularly when the rising number of Year 12 students in Territory schools is taken into account. Last year, there were 690 students in Year 12. This year, there are more than 900 and, in 1989, when the University College is fully operational, it is estimated that there will be 1200 students in Year 12. The Territory is moving rapidly towards statehood and we can no longer afford a situation where hundreds of our students are forced interstate for a university education.

I should point out that it is becoming progressively harder for Territory students to actually gain entry to interstate institutions. This is because, in recent years, thousands of students in southern capitals have been unable to get university and advanced education places because of the imposition of quotas. This means that interstate institutions have had to apply higher than normal entry standards to stay within their quotas, with the result that some institutions now appear to be giving preferences to students from their own states, which is quite understandable. The effect of this on Territory families with students reaching university age is obvious. The brain drain is anything but a myth in the Territory and the majority of students who study interstate rarely return to the Territory to work anyway.

Mr Ede: Looking at it from this side, Cabinet has suffered a brain drain.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, comments like that typify the attitude of certain members of the opposition in regard to educational opportunities for Territory students. It is disappointing to hear, but I am sure the community is aware of the attitude of members opposite towards education and it will vote accordingly.

Let me take these issues together, as realistically must be done, and present a scenario to members of the Assembly. Firstly, we have a rapidly-increasing Year 12 student population. Secondly, we have hundreds of students forced to leave the Territory in order to study interstate. Thirdly, we have interstate institutions discriminating in favour of students from their own states. Fourthly, we have a situation where students who study interstate rarely return to the Territory to work. Finally, we have a situation where the Territory is rapidly moving towards statehood with a

subsequent demand for qualified people. That adds up to a pretty simple equation: the Territory is rapidly losing the cream of its youth and the Territory government simply cannot afford to let that situation continue.

There is only one valid solution to this problem and that is to become as self-sufficient as possible, and that means that we provide our own tertiary education. It is important to remember that the tertiary facilities that we are now establishing will be the foundation on which the future tertiary education sector of the state of the Northern Territory will be built.

The statistics I have just presented establish an incontestable case for the establishment of a free-standing University College. The further consideration is that we are building for the future, although I know that the opposition is not interested in that. Darwin is not some regional centre in a southern state which already has one or more established universities. It is the capital city of what will become the seventh state of Australia. For the reasons I have outlined, the federal government's offer can only be condemned as manifestly inadequate. In fact, there is a far better case against the federal government for being totally naïve and unrealistic than there is against the Territory government for being unreasonable.

Mr Speaker, let me address another aspect of what journalists must be calling the great site debate if they are not calling it something worse than that by now. What I am referring to here is the opposition's contention that the site of the University College has changed many times. It is unfortunate that the opposition cannot come up with something better than that sort of rubbish to contribute to this very important issue. There has only been 1 change: from the Darwin Primary School police barracks site to Myilly Point. This change was made because the Myilly Point site became available after the projected cost of the Darwin Primary School police barracks site blew out to over \$10m. That was obviously unacceptable and new options had to be considered. I repeat that there was only 1 change.

The Leader of the Opposition has mentioned the land allocated at Palmerston as some kind of evidence that the Territory government has repeatedly changed its mind about the site. I can only say that I find it utterly appalling that he should misuse his position in an attempt to mislead the public in this matter. The Leader of the Opposition is fully aware that Palmerston will indeed be the future site of the University of the Northern Territory. He is also fully aware there has been no question of moving to that site until the University College has become fully established.

Mr Smith: Rubbish. Read the former Chief Minister's policy statement.

Mr MANZIE: Two important factors will have evolved: firstly, student numbers will have risen to the stage where it is economically feasible to build a new campus and, secondly, the infrastructure at Palmerston itself will have developed considerably. Until then, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, it is far more economical to establish a discrete University College campus within the Darwin metropolitan area. I think it is a matter of some regret that the opposition is forced to rely on the member for Millner as its economic spokesman because he seems to be incapable of understanding rational economic propositions. It has become obvious from his statements on this issue that he certainly does not regard himself as a Territorian because he is doing anything but working in the best interests of the Territory. In fact, his statements on this issue could well have been written by Hugh Hudson. They certainly are not based on reality.

It is a great pity that the Leader of the Opposition has decided to adopt the Canberra line on this issue because I had hoped that the government could enter into a meaningful dialogue with the opposition. I had hoped that he would have discarded his spurious arguments by now and have been prepared to start working for the Territory, just for a change. That is because the federal government's intransigence on this issue has literally reached the stage where Australia's national reputation may be damaged. I know that sounds like an extravagant claim but it is a fact that the University College has received 44 applications from students in Malaysia.

Considering that the federal government has been actively urging Australian universities to sell education to overseas students, I would have expected it to be delighted with this development. However, the only reaction from the federal government has been to advise the Warden of the University College that those students will not be given visas to enter Australia. That is not just being bloody-minded; it is being absolutely hypocritical. Not only is the federal government prepared to give Territory students air fares to entice them to study interstate rather than recognise the University College, not only is it prepared to offer the entire Territory population only a meagre 20 university places, it is also prepared to hold itself up to international ridicule simply out of blind pig-headedness.

The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that the Chief Minister has been forced to write to the Prime Minister to ask him to intervene. This is probably our last opportunity to get the federal government to see sense before the University College begins operating next year. Our actions would have had a far greater chance of success if we had been able to approach the Prime Minister on a bipartisan basis. I forwarded to the member for Arafura, as opposition spokesman on education, a copy of the documentation which was enclosed with the letter to the Prime Minister.

He is laughing over there; he still thinks this is a joke. I am appalled that members opposite can treat this as a humorous matter. I hope that, when the member for Arafura has considered the information contained in the documentation that I sent him, he will be able to convince the Leader of the Opposition that the Territory government is not using the University College to score cheap political points. The Territory government has established the University College because it is a vital step in the development of the Territory. That is our duty, and I can assure honourable members that I will not shirk it.

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

Debate adjourned.

#### SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have given further consideration to the matter raised by the member for Arafura. Such words may not be used in this Assembly either in debate or in quotation. I will have the Hansard record amended appropriately.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Office of Women's Affairs

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, honourable members will have seen a press release issued from my office on 29 October in which I announced that, as Chief Minister, I had taken the portfolio responsibility for women's affairs.

Recently, I put in place administrative arrangements to ensure that my government is responsive at the highest level to the needs and aspirations of women throughout the Territory. During my address-in-reply speech on 18 June, I advised that the positions of Women's Adviser and Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity would report directly to me to ensure that, as head of government, I would be provided with an overview of women's concerns and interests and that there would be coordination of the policies and practices we have initiated to enhance the status of women in the Territory. After discussions and consultation with key women, I decided, for similar reasons, that the Women's Advisory Council should report directly to me and that the Office of Women's Affairs, which provides a secretariat for the Women's Advisory Council, would be located within my department. Women are becoming increasingly involved in government and, of course, in all aspects of community life. Within my department, it will be possible for the Women's Affairs Unit to provide a policy coordination approach and maintain an audit brief on issues which have particular impact on women within the departments of the Northern Territory Public Service.

Early in December, at Yulara, the Women's Advisory Council will have its last meeting for 1986. This meeting is the final meeting for 4 members who have served on the council since its inauguration in 1983. I would like to put on record today my appreciation for the work and contributions made by Anne Rebgetz from Jabiru, Kathryn Flynn and Robyne Burridge of Darwin, and Silvia Lachs from Tennant Creek. I would also like to congratulate Robyne Burridge on her recent appointment as a representative of Territory women on the National Women's Consultative Council. I am sure she will do an excellent job of taking the views of Territory women to Canberra.

The government is proud of its initiative in setting up the Women's Advisory Council which is a clear indication of our commitment to giving women greater recognition in the policy-making processes, not just on so-called women's issues, but in all the decision-making forums of government. The Women's Advisory Council has played a vital role during its first 4 years as a vehicle for 2-way communication between Territory women and the government. It has met in regional centres throughout the Territory and promoted community awareness of the status of women and the concept of equal opportunity. It has consulted with many individual women and women's organisations.

The council has put recommendations to government on many issues, including health, education, rural women, Aboriginal women and anti-discrimination. It was instrumental in ensuring that a superintendent for equal opportunity and a senior education officer for the education of girls were appointed within the Department of Education in 1984. These officers recently participated with representatives of the states and the Commonwealth in the preparation for the Commonwealth Schools Commission of a national policy on the education of girls. I am proud to announce that my government endorsed this interim report which is an important document concerning the education of girls in Australian schools today.

More recently, the council cooperated with the Communications Division of the Department of Community Development in the production of a video about Aboriginal women's resource centres throughout the NT. This video will become part of the video magazine circulated to all Aboriginal communities. It is hoped that it will give Aboriginal women more information on how to establish resource centres in communities where they do not exist at present.

Earlier this year, a major study on women in remote areas was commissioned by the government, on the recommendation of the Women's Advisory Council.

This study was completed recently and I understand that it is on the agenda for the next council meeting, to be held at Yulara, where a response to recommendations is being finalised before being submitted with the report to Cabinet. This report is the first in Australia to look comprehensively at the lives of women in very remote areas.

The year 1985 marked the end of the United Nation's Decade for Women, with governments all over the world reviewing their achievements in raising the status of women. In July 1985, we sent a delegation of 3 Territory women, led by June Tuzewski, currently convener of the Women's Advisory Council, to the End of the Decade World Conference held in Nairobi. She was accompanied by Christine Charalambous, a young Territory woman of the Greek Cypriot community, and Ngarrawu Mununggurr, a young traditional Aboriginal woman of the Yirrkala community. It was significant that 1985 was also the United Nations Year of Youth. Reports from these women, on their return, reminded us of the harsh conditions under which women live and work in many parts of the world, and the continued need to work for progress at the international level.

A grant was given to the United Nations Association of Australia NT, Status of Women Committee, to enable women throughout the Territory to celebrate the end of the decade. Many events were sponsored, including several exhibitions in the visual arts and crafts, 'Frontier Follies', a major theatrical production at Brown's Mart by the Women's Theatre Group involving over 90 women, a women and health week, events for Australian church women and the Salvation Army, projects for migrant women, and special receptions and luncheons at regional centres throughout the Territory.

The government established the Women's Information Centre in Darwin in 1984 and in Alice Springs in 1985, honouring an election promise. It was recognised that women, particularly those at home rearing children, often lacked information on government services and how to deal with that system. It was considered important that they have access to information in a supportive environment. Many families come to the Territory leaving behind traditional family supports where information is shared with friends and relatives by word of mouth.

Since opening, the Women's Information Centres have monitored over 7000 inquiries on matters ranging from information on how to contact NT women's organisations to family law and retraining options. Women in small towns and communities in the NT and within the suburbs of the 2 main centres, Darwin and Alice Springs, have stated frequently that they can discuss personal and family decisions and problems. A wide variety of information has been sought by telephone and personal visits. In Darwin, there is a consistent trend in requests for resource materials, including pamphlets, books, posters and articles.

The government's policy is to encourage families to settle in and adjust to the Territory. This is just one of many policies which aim to ensure that women who are newcomers to the Territory are integrated into Territory life. Some sections of the media in the Northern Territory have regularly characterised my government's commitment to enhance the status of women as 'trendy' and unjustified on the grounds of cost in these times of scarce resources. But the government believes that, to be cost-effective, it must utilise all the physical and intellectual resources of the community fully in the day-to-day political, economic and social life of the Territory. In particular, the involvement of women in our statehood process is not only desirable but essential if the views of the whole community are to be reflected.

The television program 'Women Today' is another example of the government recognising that women need a fair go. The objectives of the project are twofold. Firstly, it aims to provide a regular television program by, for and about Territory women. It covers a broad range of topics and people and has provided information about community and government programs. It offers a forum for discussion of topics of special interest to women and a platform for giving recognition to women working in various fields; for example, trades, sport and government. Secondly, it aims to train women in the art of television interviewing and presentation and to show women in active roles in the community. The program is broad in scope and representative of women from all walks of life in the Territory. It reaches women who are in the home.

Child-care is essential for working mothers and it is also needed by women at home who require a safe place to leave their children while they do the family shopping, visit a hairdresser or doctor or simply have a break from the demands of full-time child-rearing. The government's record of commitment to children's services in the Territory is excellent and it will continue to remain high on our agenda. Since 1983, child-care services in the NT have been expanded by the construction of 3 purpose-built, child-care centres at Gray, Driver and Dripstone at a cost of \$970 000. Financial assistance totalling \$363 022 has been provided to a range of community groups through the grants-in-aid scheme. The government has entered into a triennial funding agreement with the Commonwealth for the provision of children's services and this will ensure an ongoing level of provision of services. A further 2 child-care centres are presently under construction at a cost of \$900 000 and will commence operations in January 1987. Moulden will provide 32 places and Katherine East will provide 40 places. Family day care and occasional care places will also increase.

With the cooperation of the federal Department of Community Services, the level of provision of community-based child-care centres and family day care schemes is one of the highest in Australia. The provision of a 20% salary subsidy to all centres totalling \$1.124m in the past 3 years has kept the cost of child-care down in comparison with the southern states. This is a magnificent record in a place where, as we all know only too well, the cost of living is higher than in many other parts of Australia. The Territory and New South Wales governments are the only Australian governments which provide this level of subsidy in the children's services area.

Children are the Territory's greatest resource and I make no apologies for giving children's services such a priority. The number of women who are in the work force and have young children is far greater in Darwin than the national average. It is not only women's lives which are changing, but men's lives as well. Men are sharing in household chores - unfortunately - and are learning that it can be very rewarding to have a closer relationship with the day-to-day lives of their young children.

Earlier this year, the government commissioned the Children's Services Task Force whose terms of reference were to report on future directions for child-care and related services in the NT over the next 5 to 10 years. The Minister for Community Development has tabled the task force report and given a full statement on it during these sittings.

In 1983, the federal government announced at the International Labor Organisation Convention in Geneva that it was committed to ratifying ILO convention 156 which covers workers with family responsibilities. I have asked that a Cabinet submission be prepared on this subject in order for Cabinet to come to a decision on whether the Northern Territory government will endorse this ratification.

Health is an area of fundamental importance to all women and to those for whom they are responsible. The Northern Territory is represented on the national forum by Dr Pauline Wilson of the Royal Darwin Hospital. Dr Wilson is a member of the Women's Health National Working Party which reports to Commonwealth, state and Territory health ministers. At the moment, nursing issues are dominating the national agenda. In 1984, the Territory government agreed to the implementation of a 38 hour week for nurses. To address the present and future needs of the nursing industry and to improve career paths and choices of nurses, the government established a task force. This specifically reviewed the career structure for nurses in the NT and recommendations from its report will be actioned during the first half of 1987. The Territory government has provided refresher courses for nurses and nurses are paid nominal award rates of salary while attending these programs. Nurse education has been upgraded by the transfer of the basic nursing course from the Royal Darwin Hospital to the Darwin Institute of Technology to commence in January 1987.

Recently, 2 new organisations for women were formed in Darwin: the NT Branch of the Federation of University Women and the NT Women Lawyers Association. I wish both of these organisations every success for the future and welcome their contribution to Territory affairs.

As an employer, the government's record is good. The NT Public Service employs slightly more women than men. While the majority of women are in the lower-paid positions, statistical trends indicate that this situation is changing. Recently, there has been an increasing number of women in decision-making positions in the executive section of the public service. The figure currently stands at 16% and I understand that it is amongst the highest in the Australian public sector. Women have been appointed chief executives in the NT Housing Commission, the Department of Health and the Magistrates Courts.

In a recent press release, I announced that the Equal Opportunities Unit was moving back to the Public Service Commissioner's Office where I will ensure that equal opportunity is applied within the public sector of the NT in a more direct and integral way. The government is committed to a policy of equal opportunity which promotes the removal of barriers which inhibit the ability of individuals or groups to develop to their maximum potential. These barriers may be direct or indirect discrimination in areas such as employment, provision of accommodation, education, health and other services, and may arise from factors of race, sex, national origin or physical disability. The government is committed to the development of positive policies and programs to implement equal opportunity and to ensure that government services are consistent with equal opportunity principles.

The government's record is good. It established the Division of Equal Opportunity within the Public Service Commissioner's Office in 1984 and that became the Office of Equal Opportunity in 1985. It established the Disabled Persons Bureau in 1981. It established the Aboriginal Development Branch within the Public Service Commissioner's Office in 1983. In the work-based skills development program of the Aboriginal Development Branch, I have been told that participating females outnumber males by a significant 7 to 1. Throughout 1984-85, the Management Development Centre in the Public Service Commissioner's Office ran 'Women in Management' training courses. These particular courses were another first in Australia. They assisted women managers in identifying and using their skills at a management level. They were such a success that women managers set up ongoing 'Women in Management' lunch meetings to continue their learning in their own time and at their own expense.



In October, I issued a directive through the Public Service Commissioner that future NT legislation be drafted in non-discriminatory language. This also applies to other legally binding documents including all acts, regulations, bylaws, general orders, accompanying forms, applications and so on. All documents, including press releases, speeches and publications issued through the Office of the Public Service Commissioner, government departments and statutory bodies, should be free of discriminatory language. The Office of Equal Opportunity is preparing guidelines to assist government departments and statutory authorities in the implementation of this policy.

Recently, the NT was represented at an important conference held in Canberra to discuss legislative and award restrictions to women's employment. The conference was convened by the Office of the Status of Women in association with Worksafe Australia, the national occupational health and safety commission. The conference was tripartite and intergovernmental, with representatives from Commonwealth, state and Territory governments, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Confederation of Australian Industry and the Business Council of Australia. The major objectives of the conference were to eliminate discrimination against women in employment by identifying changes that should be made to restrictive provisions in legislation, regulations and awards, taking into account the occupational health and safety implications of proposed changes, and to agree to a firm timetable for the implementation of these changes. I was pleased to attend this conference myself and give the Northern Territory report.

Unlike the states of Australia, the Northern Territory does not have any legislative restrictions on women's employment. In fact, our legislation could be used as an example for the rest of Australia. Industrial awards are a different matter. As a territory, we have not been granted the industrial relations powers normally attributed to a state. Therefore, most awards in public service determinations are determined under the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and not under Territory jurisdiction. However, there are a number of exceptions; for example, those made under the Police Administration act and the Police Arbitral Tribunal Act.

As far as women's access to apprenticeships is concerned, most federal Northern Territory awards refer only to the wages to be paid to apprentices and the conditions under which they should work. This does not take in the actual terms of the apprenticeship which include such things as the imposition of upper age limits for entry into or completion of an apprenticeship, the probationary period, nor the possibility of obtaining credits for previous education, training or experience. Northern Territory legislation relating to apprenticeships allows for entry of an apprenticeship for any person over the age of 15 years, extension of the 3 month probationary period for a further 3 months should the employer and apprentice agree, and reduction in the duration of the apprenticeship depending on the level of the apprentice's theoretical knowledge and grasp of practical skills. There is also provision for flexibility in the setting of wage levels for adult apprentices on an individual basis. Hence, once again, the Northern Territory appears to be in advance of the states in regard to access to apprenticeship training for women.

Social attitudes may still restrict women's participation in trades and it is in this area that education of the community at large regarding equal employment opportunity will play a vital role. In practice too, wage provisions requiring that adults be paid at an adult rate may mitigate against mature people gaining access to apprenticeships. The Northern Territory government, along with other states present at the conference, endorsed the

joint communique by the Confederation of Industry and the ACTU, in which both parties agreed to resolve the issues relating to restrictive legislation and the award provisions as speedily as possible with the aim of completing the process by the end of 1988.

Today I would like to make an important announcement concerning the introduction of equal opportunity plans. I am pleased to announce that the Public Service Commissioner will issue a general order to all Northern Territory Public Service departments and instrumentalities, covering all aspects of equal opportunity work plans, including provision of services and reporting procedures. Departments or instrumentalities will be given broad guidelines and assisted with implementation by the Office of Equal Opportunity.

This requirement will not present an onerous task for departments which already have mechanisms for keeping statistical profiles on their staff. They will be required to include a progress report in their departmental annual reports, and an overall summary report will be included in the annual report of the Public Service Commissioner's Office. Equal opportunity plans are for the purpose of ensuring an effective and efficient public service as required within the Northern Territory Public Service Act. I trust that I have bipartisan support for this initiative.

This ministerial statement described the continuation of a process of consolidation and strengthening by the government and the establishment of a sense of direction. I am proud of the government's achievements. Much has been achieved yet much remains to be done. I commend this statement to the Legislative Assembly and hope that women, side by side with men, will continue to take the opportunity to contribute to the future development of the Territory whether in a domestic setting, in the work force or in any other aspect of life. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I suspect that full equality for women will have been achieved when we do not have to make statements like this any more. Secondly, I suspect that full equality for women in the work force, particularly the public service, will have been achieved when we are able to list the number of women we have as heads of departments.

Mr Perron: Rubbish!

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You do not have any MLAs here.

Mr SMITH: That is an instantaneous response from the troglodyte members opposite who have never understood women's issues in the Northern Territory. I exclude the Chief Minister from that category. Obviously, he does not belong in it, and this is an important statement on initiatives being taken to ensure that women play their right and proper role in Northern Territory society.

It is an unfortunate fact that women's matters have been bit of a bouncing ball in public service structures under the last 2 or 3 Chief Ministers. It was regrettable, and I think we said so at the time, that the Office of Women's Affairs was taken out of the Chief Minister's Department and given to the Minister for Community Development. I am not saying that because of the personnel involved but because I think it is essential - and I am glad it has been recognised by the Chief Minister - that the Office of Women's Affairs be placed directly under the Chief Minister as he then is able to give his personal attention and his personal imprimatur to issues affecting women. We see the benefit of that in this statement.

I will start at the end of the statement. I welcome the initiative that the Chief Minister has taken in relation to equal employment opportunities and we will certainly be watching that with some interest. Any attempt to end the patronage and nepotism that has characterised our public service, particularly in relation to women, is welcome indeed.

Whilst the statement gives us a fairly rosy picture, there are still some things that need to be said and some actions that need to be taken. Public servants in the Northern Territory are still less protected than their counterparts in private enterprise. We still have only the flimsy protection of an administrative rather than a legislative framework. In private enterprise, employees are covered by the sex discrimination legislation and racial discrimination acts. Proper anti-discrimination legislation is needed and has been called for again and again by this side of the Assembly.

Whilst we are pleased to see the recognition of the need for some formal process, we would still argue for legislation. It is interesting that all states, except Queensland and Tasmania, have such legislation. I put it to the Chief Minister, who has enlightened attitudes in relation to this, that the next logical step for the government to take is to enact legislation to cover those areas.

Mr Speaker, there is nothing in the statement about the mechanisms for grievance and appeal. The current processes are not suitable, particularly in relation to sexual harassment, where sensitivity and discretion are essential. A report from a departmental head gives great opportunity for the closing of ranks and little comfort to the victim.

From the statement, it is not clear whether the equal opportunity provisions relate to women only. We would like to be assured that equal opportunity is to be applied in its broadest context and so as to ensure equal opportunity irrespective of race, sex, national origin or physical disability. I know that section 14 of the Public Service Act deals with the elimination of discrimination within the public service. What we are talking about is a proper means of ensuring that that becomes more than an ideal and is implemented.

The new initiative outlines a reporting procedure. We will be interested to see how it works and how the effectiveness and impact of these equal opportunity plans are to be measured. Simply saying how it is does not show whether it is working. We need a process to ensure that these policies and plans are in fact implemented.

Mr Speaker, there is no concept of merit protection in the Chief Minister's statement. Where is the process to guard against individual discrimination? We can attempt to address structural discrimination in this Assembly, but individuals need a complaints and redress procedure as well. Reports do not necessarily mean there is a commitment. Effecting change requires commitment. Commitment means providing resources as well as setting up processes and plans.

We have welcomed each initiative in this area and we have watched the ups and downs of women's issues as attitudes in the government run hot and cold. As another example, I would ask the Chief Minister where the 'Women in Management' courses are today. Where is the 'Women and Work' training program today? That program catered for all NTPS women, not only managers. We know from the level of participation on those programs that they were not just popular, but essential to the equal opportunity philosophy. But what is

happening in the NTPS today for women's training programs? Perhaps the Chief Minister will address that question in his response.

Women need development opportunities to compete. That women comprise 16% of executives is to be expected in a young and mobile service such as the Northern Territory Public Service. For structural reasons and given that there are no seniority requirements in the service, the percentage should be higher than that. As I have said, we can only crow about it when it is very close to 50%.

The opposition also wishes to encourage families to settle in the Northern Territory. We therefore place a high priority on the needs of women. They need health, education, welfare and family support services, and employment opportunities. There are examples where the reality does not match the government's rhetoric. I mention particularly the fate of the Women's Information Centres. The minister devoted 2 pages of his speech to the Women's Information Centres, saying that their establishment honoured an election promise. He spoke about more than 7000 contacts being received from members of all sections of the Territory population: telephone contacts, personal visits, and distribution of resource materials including pamphlets, books, posters, and articles. All that is commendable. Certainly, the Women's Information Centres have been a successful government initiative. However, a recent step taken by the Department of Community Development in Alice Springs has reduced the effectiveness of the Women's Information Centre in that town quite significantly. Does the Chief Minister not know this?

Mr Hatton: I know about it.

Mr SMITH: You know about it.

Mr Hatton: You cannot make that statement with any honesty.

Mr SMITH: Hold on and let me finish.

The problem is that the Women's Information Centre in Alice Springs has been moved from its shopfront location facility to the second floor of the same building. Not only that, but the centre, as I understand it, is now sharing facilities with the Juvenile Justice and Community Welfare Sections of the Department of Community Development. That in itself says a lot about the attitudes of the Department of Community Development towards women's issues. It says in effect that the department regards women's issues as a problem area to be dealt with in the same sort of way as welfare and juvenile justice matters. This attitude is why women in Alice Springs are upset about the move. I would ask the Chief Minister and the Minister for Community Development to reconsider the move. It certainly contradicts the sentiments of the fine statement we have just heard from the Chief Minister. It is at odds with his rhetoric that we find the Women's Information Centre in Alice Springs shifting upstairs and sharing facilities with the Community Welfare and Juvenile Justice Sections of the Department of Community Development.

Another problem is that the move upstairs reduces the ability of people to contact the Women's Information Centre, both those who are physically disabled and older women. Putting it upstairs and out of the way reduces the incentive that women might have to visit it. It has also been given a much smaller space that it had previously. All of these factors unfortunately demonstrate that the government's commitment to women's issues is not reflected in events on the ground.

The other area that I would like to mention specifically is that of child-care. Again, I had hoped that the Chief Minister may have taken the opportunity to announce some additional government commitment to child-care, particularly residential care for disabled kids and those disabled young adults whom we talked about some time ago. I am aware that only about half of these people would be women or girls, but I think this is an appropriate time to mention them. Whilst I congratulate the Chief Minister on putting forward a caring and positive attitude towards the needs of women within the community, I believe he should particularly address the needs of girls who are either physically or mentally disabled.

There is no doubt that, under the present arrangements that this government has in place, those people are amongst the most disadvantaged members of our community. Lack of government resources and facilities has placed great strain on many family relationships. The government must grasp the nettle and take some measures to alleviate the situation of the mentally and physically disadvantaged in our community, and I had hoped that there would be some reference to such measures in this statement. As I said, half of them are women, and I am disappointed that there is no reference to this matter in the Chief Minister's statement. I would hope that the Minister for Community Development may be inclined to make a statement before the end of the sittings.

In conclusion, we welcome the initiatives outlined by the Chief Minister. There is no doubt that he has a much more enlightened and modern attitude towards the role of women in our community than his predecessors. Hopefully, his rhetoric will be matched by action. I am sure that the Chief Minister knows that his actions, following these words, will be watched very closely indeed by women in the community.

Debate adjourned.

#### MOTOR VEHICLES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 248)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This bill incorporates a number of small but important amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act. Firstly, it provides a mechanism to allow the owner of a hire car to use his licence as security for a loan. I foreshadowed this amendment earlier this year when the act was being amended on other matters relating to taxis. Details are to be contained in the regulations once they are finalised following consultation with the hire car and finance industries. The registrar's role will primarily be to record the lender's interests in the licence and to maintain that record until the debt has been cleared.

At present, there is no tie between the status of the vehicle and the status of the owner in terms of residency, nor is there a clear direction as to when the driver must change to a Northern Territory licence. This bill clarifies requirements for new residents of the Territory as to when they must change their licences and registration. They must do this within 3 months of arrival. Genuine visitors staying more than 3 months will be able to obtain an exemption from this requirement for both registration and licence.

Residents purchasing a vehicle from interstate will have 28 days in which to change that vehicle to Northern Territory registration after it arrives in the Northern Territory. Similarly, companies operating vehicles in the Territory will have 28 days in which to transfer their vehicles to Northern Territory registration or obtain an exemption from the registrar. Hopefully, these measures will reduce the number of interstate registered vehicles based permanently in the Territory. These contribute nothing to Territory revenue nor to TIO's Motor Accident Compensation Scheme and, by avoiding inspection, pose additional risks on the road; a subject dear to your heart, I believe, Mr Speaker.

Under the present act, the government has no power to charge a fee for inspection of defective vehicles, to remove a defect label, nor for the issue of a permit to allow vehicles of excessive dimensions to use our roads. Public vehicles, which have to be inspected other than at registration, currently cannot be charged for that inspection. This bill gives power for these types of charges to be levied. It is intended the fees levied will reflect the cost of the service provided. Of course, honourable members would remember the great debate during the passage of the Appropriation Bill in regard to additional fund-raising measures by the Northern Territory government as far as motor vehicle fees are concerned.

This bill will relax some of the more onerous requirements on persons applying for a driving instructor's licence. For instance, a licence to drive a motor car will no longer be a prerequisite to obtaining an instructor's licence for motorcycles, provided a motorcycle licence is held. Also, it will allow the registrar discretion to accept an application from a person who has not held a licence continuously for the past 3 years, where he is satisfied that that person has appropriate experience with vehicles of the relevant class. The current act leaves no discretion on these aspects and that leads to complaints of inflexibility.

The bill makes specific provisions for classes of licence within the bus category. Regulations have been prepared to commence on 1 December. The change proposed here will avoid any doubts that the registrar may issue grades of omnibus licences, as agreed nationally by the Australian Transport Advisory Council which comprises federal and state Ministers for Transport.

The further minor amendment to section 10 removes an anomaly created when licences were introduced for 16-year-old persons. An interpretation of the act as it stands could imply that a truck driver who has had his licence removed by the court for 3 months would have to wait a further 12 months before his licence could be reissued. This interpretation was certainly not intended by the government at the time the bill was passed.

Mr Speaker, as I said at the beginning, the amendments in this bill are fairly minor but important to those people affected. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

ELECTRICITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 251)

Bill presented, by leave, 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 amend the Electricity Commission Act to enable the commission to enter into commercial agreements with other parties and to supply those parties with such services as may be agreed from time to time. The need for amendment arises by virtue of the fact that the act, as it currently stands, restricts the commission to matters which relate wholly or largely to electricity.

The specific rationale for the present amendments relates to the government's recent decision to rationalise common Northern Territory Electricity Commission and Water Division services, thereby generating significant annual cost savings. Common services include meter reading, billing, revenue recovery and attendant administrative services. I trust that honourable members on both sides of the Assembly will agree that, in today's increasingly tight financial circumstances, any measures which will save costs in respect of the supply of essential services without at the same time reducing in any way the quality of those services, should be pursued as vigorously as possible.

It is also relevant to note that, in its 1985 tax-sharing relativities report, the Commonwealth Grants Commission stated that, in assessing Territory financial needs, it had decided to phase out over the next 10 years financial assistance to the Territory in respect of Darwin water supply and sewerage services. The current amendments to the Electricity Commission Act, and similar accommodating amendments to the Water Supply and Sewerage Act for the same purpose - which my colleague will introduce in a short time - will enable the government to make some early moves towards at least a partial accommodation of any reduced funding which might occur in the future.

Mr Speaker, at this stage I would like to give notice that I will be moving a suspension of standing orders to permit the passage of this bill at these sittings. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 250)

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

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the Water Supply and Sewerage Act to enable the minister responsible to enter into agreement with the Northern Territory Electricity Commission for the commission to act as an agent for the purposes of meter reading, billing and other common services. An explanation of the desirability of such rationalisation was spelt out by the Acting Minister for Mines and Energy when he presented his second-reading speech in relation to the Electricity Commission Amendment Bill earlier in these sittings. I do not propose to repeat the statements made by my colleague. However, I would again stress to honourable members on both sides of the Assembly, the necessity for the government to take advantage of any scope for economies in relation to the provision of essential services in the Territory. This amendment bill complements the previous Electricity Commission Amendment Bill in that respect. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

DARWIN PORT AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 249)

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

Mr DONDAS (Ports and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This bill seeks to amend schedule 1 of the Darwin Port Authority Act to extend the boundary of the Port of Darwin to include the soon-to-be-completed Darwin fishing harbour mooring basin. This bill is urgent, as the construction of the basin is almost complete and, within a month, will be occupied by vessels. Control of those vessels is normally achieved through the powers of the Darwin Port Authority Act. The act only applies within the limits of the Port of Darwin as defined in schedule 1 of the act. At present, the area occupied by the basin is outside the port boundaries and the intention of the proposed amendment is to include it within those boundaries. Members will appreciate, as this is the last sittings of the Assembly before the basin comes into use, that this is the last opportunity to amend the act and legalise the basin's use by vessels of an industry we are actively seeking to promote.

Due in part to the speed with which the basin has been built, coupled with negotiations with Australian National Railways for release of a pocket of land and the difficulties arising because accurate surveys were not possible until construction of the road was complete, preparation of the schedule for the act could not be completed until this time. It is essential that the amended schedule be approved so that the operation of the basin and control of the vessels using it is consistent with the whole port and comes under the Darwin Port Authority Act.

As members will be aware, this facility has been sponsored by the Darwin Port Authority and it is intended that it be managed by the Port Authority in conjunction with its other facilities. Inclusion of the basin within the port boundaries will mean that the facility will come within the jurisdiction of the Darwin Port Authority Act and bylaws. The land on which the basin is sited is owned by the Northern Territory government.

In conclusion, this bill is consistent with government policy on the port. It merely seeks to facilitate administration of the new facility. I have had discussions with the member for Nhulunbuy advising him that I would like to have this particular piece of legislation passed through all stages in these sittings. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

NORTHERN TERRITORY LAND CORPORATION BILL  
(Serial 208)

CONSERVATION COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 210)

TERRITORY PARKS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 211)

TERRITORY LOANS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION BILL  
(Serial 209)

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 212)

Continued from 27 August 1986.



Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, these cognate bills basically arise out of changes made to administrative procedures after the Hatton government came into office. The bills arise from changes which have had the basic effect of dismantling the much-discredited NTDC. Most of the effects of this decision can be handled administratively. For example, former NTDC housing responsibilities have gone to the Housing Commission, industrial land and direct land sales were given to Lands, and development loans and loan management functions were given to Treasury. However, this bill deals with 2 areas where legislation is required. One is simple and non-controversial. It deals with the existing loans and development guarantee functions of the NTDC.

The Territory Loans Management Corporation is set up to manage the existing obligations of NTDC. In other words, the existing loans and repayments entered into by NTDC will be taken over by this body. There will be no ability for the Territory Loans Management Corporation to enter into loan arrangements on its own behalf and, therefore, this is purely a transitional provision.

The second amendment deals with the replacement of the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation and the Conservation Land Commission by the Northern Territory Land Corporation. The Northern Territory Land Corporation, under that circumstance, will hold titles previously held under both these acts.

The bill and the minister's second-reading speech hide a crucial change in attitude on the government's part to the status of land acquired for conservation purposes. At present, the Conservation Land Corporation holds all national parks and reserves under Northern Territory title; that is, there is a separate act with a separate board. Under this new act, conservation land will be thrown in with other land held by the Northern Territory Land Corporation. That is a significant change. It is important, at this stage, to refer to the minister's second-reading speech where he said: 'In the course of establishing the new Land Corporation, it was considered to be essential that the principle for which the Land Corporation was established should not be lost. When land is acquired for the conservation estate, its status should continue as land held in trust for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future generations'. He went on to say: 'When the new Land Corporation acquires land for conservation and related purposes, it should be earmarked as such and held separate from the category of land that the new Land Corporation holds for specific present and future development purposes'.

Mr Speaker, those are fine sentiments. Unfortunately, as I read it, the bill does not reflect them. There is nothing in the bill that provides for this. When I inquired, I was advised that the matters to which I referred will happen administratively. The Land Corporation will ask the Conservation Commission to manage conservation areas on its behalf. This is a distinct weakening of the present legislation where conservation land is separated from other land through legislation.

Mr Hanrahan: Haven't you read the amendments?

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, in answer to the interjection, I must say that we have only had them today. I am advised by the Leader of Government Business that those amendments address themselves to the problems that I have outlined. If the amendments do leave the Conservation Land Commission in place, the reservations that I have about the bill will be removed. I think it is essential that land set aside for park purposes be held separately from land

that is set aside for developmental purposes, and not administered by the same authority. With those comments and on the condition that my understanding of the amendments is correct, the opposition supports the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I indicate at the outset that I agree with the intention of these bills. I know why they have been introduced but I am rather concerned that their intention may fall by the wayside through confusion in administration. I have serious worries that the previous advantages of the NTDC, in respect of its being a one-stop shop for loans and loan management, may not be adequately duplicated in the new arrangements, and that the people this bill aims to help will be seriously disadvantaged by the confusion.

I know, as do we all, that the Northern Territory Development Corporation had certain deficiencies. I believe it is best to put its functions under the administration of Treasury because at least that department knows how to count - and count buffalo in particular. I will not go into that any further. I have my views on that and ...

Mr Ede: Let us hear them; it sounds interesting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: As I said, I believe Treasury knows how to count buffalo better than the NTDC does.

Some time ago, the Minister for Primary Production issued a press release in relation to these bills. He said that the Department of Primary Production and ADMA would have certain interests in this legislation. The Department of Primary Production would take over the administration of industry assistance schemes and ADMA would take over private industry assistance schemes. ADMA will take over any matters dealing with rural loan schemes. The Department of Ports and Fisheries will take over any matters dealing with the fishing industry loan arrangements. Any other current matters will be taken over by the Territory Loan Management Corporation, the Department of Business, Technology and Communications and the Tourist Commission.

As regards the loan arrangements, I believe ADMA has a great deal of work ahead of it and the system will need a lot of bedding down before it will be operating successfully. ADMA will be operating with a fraction of the staff that the NTDC had to do the same amount of work. I believe that it can do the job, as its previous history has shown. I hope there is no confusion in the administration of the legislation in its proposed form. I have spoken favourably of AMDA's operations before and I will do so again. I have heard no adverse comments about the workings of AMDA, neither personally nor by hearsay. It is a case of some being born great and others having greatness thrust upon them.

In regard to loans for agricultural development - and I include pastoral, horticultural and other interests in that sphere - I would not like to see ADMA as a lender of last resort as NTDC was. When legislation for the establishment of the NTDC was introduced, we were all perhaps looking at the world through rose-tinted spectacles. We all wanted to see the development of the Territory proceeding at all costs, and that occurred. However, I think the time for lending money to people who have no hope in hell of succeeding has passed. There are such people. They are the 'gunnas' or 'gunna-dos'. Being proverbial optimists, they always think that great wealth is around the corner if only somebody will give them a bankroll to start with. The banks would not lend them money so they used to go to the NTDC. Over the years, probably in the interests of development of the Territory and with an attitude of camaraderie, NTDC lent the money and it was lost. Those days are over.

Development of the Territory has succeeded to a point when anybody who wants to borrow money must show that he has something other than good ideas. If the banks or credit societies will not lend money to people, I do not believe our government should stick its neck out unnecessarily and lend taxpayers' funds. Using the NTDC as a lender of last resort was a bit like using a stick to beat our own backs. Those days are now over. I would hope that, in the administration of this legislation, there will be clear guidelines so that applicants for development funds do not go round in circles and become confused in their attempts to obtain money.

The bill that I will refer to first is the Agricultural Development and Marketing Amendment Bill. ADMA, whilst taking over future loan management regarding agricultural interests, will continue with its current objectives of encouraging agricultural enterprise and organising its development and consequent marketing. In reading the NTDC report passed to us this morning, we see that the NTDC stressed its entrepreneurial role and its recognition of export markets, line arrangements to primary industry, and commissioning of studies in relation to particular primary industries. I believe this work will be taken over by ADMA and DPP quite satisfactorily.

With regard to the actual working of ADMA and its loan management, I have been told that the manager of ADMA will be responsible for any application for loans up to \$75 000, and the Secretary of Department of Primary Production will be responsible for any applications for loans up to \$125 000. The acceptance or rejection of these applications will still be a matter for consideration by the board of ADMA.

In his second-reading speech, the minister touched not only on the changes in the legislation considered now, but also on certain administrative changes for which legislation was not necessary. I refer to the Northern Territory Housing Commission taking over industry housing responsibilities and I have no argument with that. I cannot recall when this responsibility was taken over by the Northern Territory Development Corporation because, 2 years ago, it came under the Northern Territory Housing Commission. It appears that it has now been returned to it. I do not see any objection to that because the commission was established to deal with housing in the Northern Territory and that can take in industry housing along with residential housing.

The Department of Lands will take over responsibility for industrial land and direct land sales which, until recently, were handled by the Northern Territory Development Corporation. Again, I have no argument with that, and I sincerely hope that no bureaucratic obstacles arise in the administration of this function. I have been told that officers of the Department of Lands have a history of treating land as if it were their own lifeblood and appear to be reluctant to part with a drop of it. This is not to say that grants of land should be strewn around willy-nilly to everybody. However, I believe that, in the administration of direct land grants, the development interests of the Northern Territory should be catered for first.

An administrative change not mentioned in the minister's second-reading speech was the takeover by the Department of Business, Technology and Communications of certain of the Northern Territory Development Corporation's roles, such as the negotiating role in business investment in the Northern Territory, coupled with investigation of business opportunities here and overseas. This involves those reciprocal arrangements whereby the Northern Territory government encourages investment in the Territory, particularly from Asia, and in turn encourages businesses already established here to expand in the countries to our near north.

I turn now to the bills and amendments relating to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Act and the Conservation Commission Act. The Conservation Land Corporation will stay intact and handle land set aside for parks, reserves, sanctuaries, and any land with future similar planned uses. I am very pleased to see this, and I think it might obviate any difficulties that may arise in the administration of the planned Land Corporation.

Amendments to the Northern Territory Land Corporation Bill mean that the new legislation will relate to the Territory Development Land Corporation and not the Conservation Land Corporation as well. In effect, the new Northern Territory Land Corporation will only be the Territory Development Land Corporation under a new name, but it will be administered by the Department of Lands. All titles, rights and interests will be transferred in toto to the Department of Lands, and I agree with that decision.

I consider the Territory Loans Management Corporation Bill an unusual piece of legislation in that it will have a limited life. It will stay on the statute books as long as there are loans on the books of the Northern Territory Development Corporation to be managed, restructured and so on. When all those loans are finalised, the legislation will expire. The power for that is contained in clause 3(1) and (2). New loans for particular purposes will be handled and managed, according to the particular interests involved, by ADMA, DPP, the Department of Ports and Fisheries, the Department of Business, Technology and Communications, and the Tourist Commission.

One clause in this bill could create a comedy of errors. I refer to clause 7 which says that the Territory Loans Management Corporation shall not have less than 3 or more than 5 members. That is okay. I agree with small committees because, whilst some people may say they become a bit dictatorial, they have greater manoeuvrability. I believe that, when you have to move fast, committees of 3 or 4 are much better than ones of 33 or 34.

Clause 7 says that the corporation shall 'consist of not less than 3 nor more than 5 members'. However, clause 8(3) says that, in the absence of the chairman and deputy chairman, the members present may elect a chairman who will have all the chairman's powers. Assuming there are only 3 people on this corporation, that is certainly going to create a comedy of errors. We could have one person comprising the chairman and the complete quorum. I hope that that situation does not arise because it would be taking a ridiculous situation to an extreme. I believe that the minister is conscientious. He has the power to establish the ground rules which determine how this corporation will work. The legislation says that the corporation is subject to directions and I would expect that he or she will certainly consider the number of people on the corporation when appointing the members.

I certainly agree with clause 9 which indicates that the minister has the final discretion in terms of the tenure of corporation members, and I certainly agree with clause 15 which says that the corporation is subject to the directions of the minister. I agree with these provisions in view of the fading life of this legislation and also because I believe that, if a minister has the responsibility for any legislation or statutory corporation, he should have the right of appointment and the right to determine the discretion of the statutory body. As the minister said in his second-reading speech, ADMA has a limited life and this legislation will ensure that, on its demise, any of its assets which were to go to the Northern Territory Development Corporation will now go to the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation.

The implications of these cognate bills necessitate close and concentrated reading. I believe that the streamlining of administration resulting from the allocation of NTDC's functions to various departments will be very effective.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I had intended to talk primarily about the status of the conservation land. However, I see that this has been covered in the amendments that, unfortunately, were circulated only this morning which makes it rather difficult to go through all the ramifications. On the other hand, it will allow me to speak in a little more detail on the other area that I wish to cover in the debate.

The Chief Minister's second-reading speech detailed the quite substantial reduction in the functions controlled by the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications. We support that. We think that it is appropriate and we are glad that that has been done. We believe that it probably should go a bit further. We have seen today how incapable he is of handling what is left. It would have been the horror of horrors if he had actually still had the other functions set out in this legislation.

Look at what has been taken off him so far. The rural assistance and rural development functions have been taken from him and given to the Department of Primary Production and ADMA. The functions of fishing port development and fishing support services have gone to the Department of Ports and Fisheries. Industrial housing responsibilities have gone to the Northern Territory Housing Commission. The Department of Lands will assume responsibility for industrial land and direct land sales. Finally, the Northern Territory Treasury will administer the development loan and loan management functions. Those 5 major functions have been taken from the minister, but he still cannot handle it. We have seen that in what has occurred with the Trade Development Zone.

I would like to propose that we go a couple of steps further in rationalising the functions controlled by the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications. The technology function could be given to the Department of Transport and Works. That department ran a communications network in the bush for many years and, given the limitations of technology at that stage, it did a handsome job. I think that it obviously should take over the technology function.

We have seen that the Trade Development Zone will cost large amounts of money over the years. I think we should give it to Treasury because the Treasurer, as we know, is overseas raising loans at the moment. He could raise some more loans while he is over there and maybe we could get all our loans bundled up together instead of having them spread higgledy-piggledy among various ministers who are negotiating with various people.

We could give marketing to the individual departments concerned. They could possibly do better than the types of deals that the minister has arranged such as handing a blank cheque to K.K. Yeung and saying: 'Away you go, have a good time. Write your own cheques. We will not hold you to any contractual letters. Just give us a letter of intent that you think is fair enough. Give us a business plan. We will not recognise it because we have never done a business plan. We did not do a business plan for the TDZ. We did not do one for the Frances Bay facility. We did not do any feasibility studies. We will not know what your business plan is when you give it to us, but give it to us anyway'.

Such a redistribution of functions would be of great benefit to this government. The minister could resume his career on the backbench where he could rise now and again in adjournment debates ...

Mr Hanrahan: Where you shall remain for ever more.

Mr EDE: ... to speak with little substance but great style.

Mr Hanrahan: I am glad I am getting up your nose, Brian.

Mr EDE: I think that reductions in the size of the ministry would really be supported by the people of the Northern Territory. I congratulate the Chief Minister on the move that he has made so far in that direction and I hope that he will continue to move that way and make the frontbench a bit less crowded. That might create a bit more administrative efficiency in the running of the various higgledy-piggledy functions of this minister for catch-alls.

Tourism is another one of his portfolios. I think that the tourist industry would be very happy to have the minister out of its hair. He would not be going around knocking their prime attractions such as Ayers Rock or rubbishing the tourist operators up and down the track who are trying to do a good job. All they get from the minister is descriptions of how hopeless they are.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There are far too many interjections. The member for Stuart will be heard in silence.

Mr EDE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I was saying, the Chief Minister has gone three-quarters of the way. He has taken three-quarters of the minister's functions away from him, but he has left him with a quarter which has proved to be too much for him anyway. I would therefore ask him to take the other quarter away from him.

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Technology and Communications): Mr Speaker, once a mug, always a mug. Unfortunately, some of the mugs in here do not even have handles on them.

Mr Ede: He is referring to his backbenchers. It is all right.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Speaker, I had no intention of speaking in this debate but it is interesting to note that the member for Stuart has been taking hold of a rope and slowly hanging himself. This is because, at my initiative, in conjunction with the Chief Minister, the government reorganised the administrative side to improve efficiency. The member for Stuart spoke about NTDC responsibilities that went to Fisheries, the Housing Commission, Lands and the Loans Management Corporation. That was done with the object of improving efficiency and ensuring that the government continued to offer the best possible services to the people who required them. The member for Stuart will stand forever admonished for the outrageous statements that he made. Rather than attempt during any debate in this Assembly to put forward constructive and plausible alternative proposals for industrial development or management or incentives for industry, he has remained silent to this day.

Mr Ede: Get rid of you and the problems will be gone.

Mr HANRAHAN: Instead, he chose to rise to his feet to make meaningless and flippant comments. That is something of which he should be ashamed because he and every other member opposite has yet to stand once in this Assembly to propose alternative policies or alternative initiatives.

Mr Ede: I just gave you one.

Mr HANRAHAN: The member for Stuart chooses to denigrate in a most flippant way constructive moves by this government for the betterment of its broad industrial base development. The member for Stuart has proved to all and sundry his absolute and total ignorance of the new Department of Business, Technology and Communications - and I hope that has been noted by the members.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will be heard in silence.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Speaker, I should really be permitted to talk at length on all the initiatives that have been taken specifically by the Department of Business, Technology and Communications which has taken over some seven-eighths of the role of NTDC. It covers such areas as economic expansion, trade promotion, employment, industrial and commercial efficiency, and technological development. The strategies are many and varied and they have been dealt with in great detail. In fact, there is an excellent policy document available to the public today through the Department of Business, Technology and Communications which outlines the development and expansion of the Territory's industrial and manufacturing base.

What did we have as a contribution from the honourable member for Stuart? Nothing but flippant comment, Mr Speaker. I am going to take his offerings today and hold them up as the opposition's alternative policy. If he bothers to read his own words tomorrow morning, he should stand up and apologise for them because they were so ridiculous and stupid. This government does not resile from its position that the Northern Territory's industrial manufacturing base will continue to grow under constructive policies for expansion and development in the face of cheap political tricks and no policy and no statements of new initiatives from honourable members opposite.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, following on from the comments made by the previous speaker, I would say that the contribution from the member for Stuart should win the waffler of the week award. That award has been held for many months now by the member for MacDonnell but today he has been upstaged by the member for Stuart. Mr Speaker, I will try to confine my remarks this afternoon to the 5 cognate bills. I will not wander off the subject to talk about trade development zones, tourism, Treasury nor any other totally irrelevant issues.

Upon assuming office earlier this year, the Chief Minister announced a rationalisation of his government's approach to business and industrial development and his intention to update the charter of what was then the Northern Territory Development Corporation which for many years has been affectionately called NTDC. The result of this review was a decision to abolish NTDC as such and to devolve its responsibilities on the various government departments with which it had interfaced for some years and upon whose behalf it had previously operated. This removed the duplication of effort that had occurred and made the various departments responsible for their own functions. These range from marketing and the supply of technical advice to funding and supervision in the field.

NTDC has fulfilled a vital and necessary role by playing its part in assisting and supporting projects of all types. I would like to add my compliments to the role played by NTDC. It has been in operation now for a number of years and it has made a significant contribution to the development that we see all around us in the Northern Territory today. During those 6 or 8 years or so, there have been a number of people working for NTDC who have contributed enormously, by way of advice and hard work, to putting us where we are right at this very moment.

However, with the changing circumstances of today's marketplace, it was necessary to rethink our approach and to adopt a new approach more in tune with the current needs of the Northern Territory 8 years on from self-government. The bills we are debating today and the amendments have been introduced to enshrine in legislation the administrative arrangements necessary to implement this government policy. The government's move will result in long-term cost savings and, at the same time, provide satisfactory levels of service to the public.

Mr Speaker, it is the government's policy to refocus its emphasis on the promotion of industry development and the marketing of our products and services. There are 5 bills involved, together with a schedule of amendments. Most of these are housekeeping matters necessary to put in place the new administrative arrangements. I do not intend to speak to these clause by clause.

However, let me comment on the previously stated intention to replace the Conservation Land Corporation and the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation. It was originally intended to amalgamate their functions under a new Northern Territory Land Corporation. It was quite obvious from comments from the opposition benches earlier that they had not read and absorbed the intent of the amendments because they did not pick up that point. After further consideration and as a matter of administrative convenience, it has been agreed that the Conservation Land Corporation will continue operating as a separate entity and will hold title to land set aside for conservation and interrelated purposes. Mr Speaker, I support the bills and the government's amendments.

Mr McCARTHY (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I am rather amazed that the Leader of the Opposition did not pick up the impact of the amendments that he had before him.

Mr Smith: I spoke about the bills. That is what second-reading speeches are all about.

Mr McCARTHY: It should have been fairly obvious to him that he was talking about a non-event. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition almost got it right except that he did not talk about the bills after he dropped the fact that we are talking about bills that will be amended fairly dramatically.

As was pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition in his second-reading speech, the Chief Minister said that it was always the government's intention to ensure that the principle for which the Conservation Land Corporation was established should not be lost. That principle is that land acquired for the conservation estate should have that status held in trust for the benefit of present and future generations. Certainly, I think all of us would support that. While it might have been possible to achieve that purpose within the framework of the proposed Land Corporation, the government has decided for administrative convenience to retain the Conservation Land Corporation. This



will clarify and emphasise the government's firm intention to guarantee that the Territory's conservation estate is held securely and managed properly. As a consequence, the Conservation Land Corporation will remain with the Minister for Conservation.

With regard to the amendment to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, while retention of the Conservation Land Corporation now makes clause 4 of this bill redundant, the amendment to section 25A of the act is desirable. This simple provision provides a legislative mechanism for the leasing of land, including privately-owned land, for the purposes of declaring a sanctuary. In regard to the conservation land estate, there is or could be a perception that, if land were not with a body such as the Conservation Land Corporation, it would not be protected as fully as it is now. I think it is important to maintain the feeling of trust that this land is held for conservation purposes. In many cases, the Conservation Commission is negotiating with private people for the lease of land for the creation of parks, reserves and sanctuaries. It is probably only a matter of perception, but it is important that they understand that that land is held specifically for conservation purposes.

The Loans Management Bill impacts on the Department of Primary Production and ADMA in that the Department of Primary Production will take over responsibility for the loans and financial matters that were controlled by the Northern Territory Development Corporation on behalf of primary producers. The corporation will administer loans and guarantees controlled formerly by NTDC. The industry departments involved in setting up loans do not carry those loans once they have been paid out to a borrower. At that stage, they are administered by another body, the Territory Loans Management Corporation. The departments have the expertise to examine loan applicants and are probably better suited to do that than any other body even perhaps including the NTDC which, regardless of the criticisms that may have been made of it over the years, did a very good job in most cases. However, the time of its officers was stretched very thinly and they did not always have the expertise easily to hand that the departments will have in their own areas.

Mr Speaker, there have been some problems in moving the loans across to industry departments. I believe those problems have been resolved and business will flow normally in most departments. Certainly, that is occurring in the Department of Primary Production at present. There has been considerable duplication of effort in that area, and I will be glad when this legislation has been debated and hopefully passed.

The only other aspect is the change of name of the Territory Development Land Corporation to the Northern Territory Land Corporation. That is a name change only because the corporation will remain totally intact. The present board will remain in place and, as a consequence, there should be no problems there. It will have an impact on the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority in that the name of the Northern Territory Development Corporation appears on a number of occasions, but that has been taken into account in the amendments. Mr Speaker, I commend the bills.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, honourable members will be aware by now of the government's firm intention to make significant savings to the ongoing costs of government, while continuing to provide satisfactory levels of service to the public. The package of legislation presently under consideration relates in particular to the fresh look the government is taking at the promotion of industry development and the marketing of Northern Territory parks and services. This entails the decentralisation of the

functions of the Northern Territory Development Corporation and the creation of 2 new statutory corporations: the Northern Territory Land Corporation and the Territory Loans Management Corporation. The reasons for this have already been outlined in this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I wish to foreshadow the government's intention to introduce some minor amendments to this legislative package during consideration in committee. Amendment schedules have been circulated already. Briefly, initially it was contemplated that the new Northern Territory Land Corporation would replace both the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation and the Conservation Land Corporation. However, the government has now decided, as a matter of administrative convenience, that the Conservation Land corporation should continue in existence as a separate entity to hold land acquired for conservation and related purposes. Therefore, a series of changes are required to be made to the package of cognate bills presently under consideration. Under the package, as presently before this Assembly, the new Land Corporation was to subsume the functions of both the corporations. This is not now necessary. The proposal is that the Development Loan Corporation will continue under the new name of the Northern Territory Land Corporation and the Conservation Land Corporation will continue in existence as before.

Mr Speaker, 2 small changes are required to the Territory Loans Management Corporation Bill. These amendments are not linked to the government's decision to retain the Conservation Land Corporation. The changes are necessary to clarify definitions, to correct a minor error and to ensure that these are loan management functions and not loan approval functions in so far as that corporation is concerned.

I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate on this legislation. It is essentially administrative in nature and reflects the administrative changes that were put in place earlier this year. When matters as simple as this come before the Assembly, it is a shame that we have to listen to the nonsense sprouted and promoted in this Assembly by honourable members such as the nonsensical statement that trickled from the mouth of the member for Stuart.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! For the benefit of the honourable Chief Minister I would like to point out that the member for Stuart is an office-holder of this Assembly and should be referred to by his title as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I would appreciate it if the Chief Minister would bear that in mind in the future.

Mr Hatton: Mr Speaker, I would be only too pleased to ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is the Chief Minister speaking to the point of order?

Mr HATTON: No, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, in any case, if the opposition wishes it, I am only too pleased to refer to the member for Stuart as the Deputy Leader of Opposition, particularly when castigating him for nonsensical statements he has made in the Assembly.

Mr Bell: Whipping him with a feather. Go for it, Steve.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, we are becoming accustomed to this sort of lunacy from the opposition. Last week, I suggested to the member for Stuart that he would be far better employed if he adopted the vocation of a fiction writer. His imagination is quite outstanding. His contribution to the debate this afternoon reflected nothing more than his fevered imagination and contributed nothing. It is unfortunate that it will appear in Hansard and therefore, by implication, may reflect upon the performance of other members of this Assembly. It does none of us any credit to have a member of this Assembly carry on in such a nonsensical way. I mention that as a point of reference although we are becoming accustomed to this so-called humour. Possibly the Leader of the Opposition could invite us to analyse the cost to the government that implementation of the measures suggested by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would involve. I will save the Leader of the Opposition the pain of worrying about that. I am sure that he was as embarrassed by the statement made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition as we were disgusted by it.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

See Minutes for amendments to bills agreed to without debate.

Bills passed remaining stages without debate.

WORK HEALTH BILL  
(Serial 232)

Continued from 18 November 1986.

Mr BELL: (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to speak briefly in relation to this particular bill and a few clauses that are of concern to the opposition and to myself in particular. I refer in particular to the clauses that prescribe benefit levels: clauses 63, 65, 66 and 71. Before I turn to that, I note in passing a couple of comments made by the the Chief Minister in his second-reading speech to this particular version of the bill. I noted with some concern that, contrary to previous proposals in respect of this legislation, no offices are to be based outside Darwin. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will be aware of my concern in respect of Darwin control in central Australia and the sensitivity of that particular issue. I sincerely trust that the decision to have officers of the Work Health Authority placed only in Darwin and not south of the Berrimah line will not have any deleterious effects on the operation of the legislation.

The second point I want to make in passing is that, representing an electorate such as mine, there is a sense of irony with which I approach debate on a work health bill because, Mr Deputy Speaker, you will recall the comments I have made about the levels of unemployment in my own electorate and the deep concern that is felt in the communities in my electorate about the lack of employment. In an electorate such as mine, there is some concern that people cannot get any work, let alone worry about the exigencies of work health.

Be that as it may, I wish to place on record my concern about the benefit levels that have been incorporated in this particular bill. I would like to foreshadow that, in the committee stage, the opposition will be arguing in its customary cogent and trenchant fashion for increased benefit levels in particular areas. Honourable members no doubt will have seen the schedule of amendments that has been circulated by the opposition. As well as other amendments that stand against the name of the Leader of the Opposition, the opposition will be proposing amendments with respect to the prescribed

children's benefit, to clause 65 which deals with long-term incapacity, to clause 66 which deals with the prescribed compensation for someone in the employ of the Territory as defined in the bill and, finally, to clause 71 which deals with compensation for permanent impairment. Rather than detail each of those now, I will leave my comments to the committee stage of the bill.

I reiterate the comments of the Leader of the Opposition when he was speaking to the previous draft of the Work Health Bill. He said that the opposition is concerned because the government has backtracked from the benefit levels outlined in a previous draft of this bill. We will be drawing attention to that in the committee stage.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I have listened with great interest to what has been said in the Assembly, particularly by the opposition, about this legislation. The government is gratified to see that the opposition has no problems with the concept of a fairer, more just and more humane workers' compensation system. The government believes it has achieved that goal with this legislation. I am sorry, however, that the opposition sees fit to attack particular aspects of the legislation, apparently without giving any proper consideration to it as a whole package.

The Leader of the Opposition is right: the exercise is a balancing act. I totally reject his statement that it is now tipped in favour of one side of the equation. The balancing factors that we are concerned with are a reduction in the cost of the system to industry and the community as a whole, the delivery of a fair, income-related benefit to those unfortunate enough to be injured at work and the removal of disincentives from and placing of real incentives in the system for the rehabilitation of injured workers and their return to remunerative employment. My government is firmly committed to the development of industry in the Northern Territory. Workers' compensation costs were fast becoming a burden on industry and thus on its future development. The Doody Inquiry found this to be the case.

The current system for longer-term injured workers was far more in the nature of welfare than compensation: a flat rate benefit no matter what you earned before the injury plus amounts for dependants. The proposed scheme is tied to lost earning-capacity which, in the case of those injured workers who can no longer work at all, will be what that person earned prior to the injury. Because of the presence of common law and the unrestricted ability to negotiate lump-sum computation payments, the current system gives injured workers no incentive to rehabilitate themselves and return to remunerative work as soon as possible. This is a fact that is not only disadvantageous to the system but also to the workers themselves. What happens to people who sit around waiting for common law actions to be concluded is well-established. They become miserable and sorry for themselves and obsessed with their illness and disability. This is the sort of thing we want to eliminate and the proposed system will do that.

For the benefit of honourable members, I would like to quote a very clear and personal example of this. I spent many years working in the area of industrial relations and personnel and much of that work related to workers' compensation. I also saw what happened when my brother suffered a motorcycle accident at work which caused extensive damage to his stomach and organs in the region of his stomach. He was convinced by lawyers that he had a massive claim. For over 6 years, he was convinced that he had incredible psychological problems as a result of that accident, whereby he could not ride a motorcycle, could not drive a car and could not hold a job. In fact, he did

not work for many years. Finally, the case went to court and the court gave a very small compensation decision. I say quite clearly in my brother's defence that he was not shonking the system. I know that because I spent many years with him during that particular period. Within 6 months of losing that case and having to pick himself up off the ground, he was working and studying at the university. He has since gained full employment and, more importantly, is riding a motorbike. All those psychological problems vanished with the court case. That is the fundamental problem with the common law system. Not only is it a cost to the entire system, but it acts as a disincentive to the employee who is injured.

The opposition has made extravagant statements about workers and their families being forced into poverty because the scheme provides only for long-term benefits of 70% of lost earning-capacity. Let me remind honourable members that this is not the only benefit to which employees are entitled under the scheme. I invite honourable members to look at the provisions which provide for payment of all medical, surgical and rehabilitation treatment, rehabilitation training, work place modifications, additional travel costs, home and vehicle modifications, and household and attendant care services. The system is a generous one.

The opposition has also berated us for reducing the long-term benefits from 80% to 70% of lost earning-capacity. This, they say, will send some workers into poverty. This is where the balancing act comes in. The opposition neglected to quote fully from the actuaries' report in respect of the normal earnings of injured workers in the Territory. It is true that that worker normally earns about 75% of average weekly earnings. However, that worker is also very likely to be male and to have relatively few dependants. The actuaries' report also estimates that, if we had kept long-term benefits at 80% of lost earning-capacity and the maximum benefit for permanent impairment at about \$75 000, the cost of the whole scheme would have been some 18% higher than the current scheme. The main factor was the overall increase in the cost of long-term benefits.

I am aware that there are cost-reducing factors that the actuaries have not fully allowed for, such as the increased emphasis on health and safety in the work place and rehabilitation. However, on the evidence available to us now, we could not put forward a scheme which entailed a possible cost increase of that magnitude. We therefore had to have a close look at the areas where increased costs were involved. It was decided that it was necessary to reduce the benefits to the levels now proposed, cutting about 10% of the total cost on the basis of the actuaries' report. We did this knowing that some low income workers with larger families could be worse off. We gave the matter close attention even though, given the profile of the typical injured worker, there should be relatively few of these. Quite frankly, the exercise proved to be very difficult. We considered using the method, now proposed by the opposition, of providing for a children's benefit. However, this would have had the effect of passing on increased benefits to all claimants, including those about whom the opposition is not concerned. Those benefits would also increase the overall cost of the scheme by an estimated 2%. I do not see the opposition pointing out any areas where we can offset them.

Even with the reduction of the benefits, 75% of claimants will be better off than they are under the current scheme. The ministerial advisory council will be asked to keep this matter under close review. If claims experience shows that there is a problem and that benefits can be raised overall without raising costs, the government will sympathetically consider a proposal along those lines.

Turning to the occupational health and safety provisions, the government believes that what is proposed is a proper approach to this subject. The government believes firmly that self-regulation is the best way to promote health and safety in the work place and that is the philosophy which is embodied in the legislation. The Work Health Authority has sufficient powers to achieve its goals in this area. For the time being, that authority will remain as a small group of specialists. Other government departments will assist it with its investigation, public contact and information dissemination roles outside Darwin. I hope the member for MacDonnell will take note of that point if he is listening. The authority's information system will be used to build up a data base on employees. Its audit power will be exercised through the specialist staff of the Northern Territory Taxation Office. A program of cyclical audits, as well as spot audits, will be set up to cover all classes of employers.

The government, which is committed to as little taxation as possible, was not prepared to bring in an extra stamp duty, however small. The government is confident that the approach to be taken, including the exemption certificate system for independent contractors, will result in an enormous improvement in the problems of under- and non-insurance.

In his contribution to this debate, the member for Stuart posed a question regarding the possible conflict between workers' compensation insurance and third-party vehicle insurance. The fact is that workers' compensation claims take precedence - as they always have. If a conflict exists, a claim cannot be made under the Motor Accidents Compensation Act.

The opposition is proposing a number of specific amendments to the legislation which will be more appropriately dealt with in the committee stage. There seems to be no point in covering them at this time. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that this is a complex piece of legislation. He said that its evolution has been disappointing. The most disappointing part for us has been the total lack of constructive input from the trade union movement. To this day, despite repeated invitations to do so, we have not received any detailed submissions from the unions. I would have thought that, if the unions had been representing the interests of their members properly, they would have taken a much closer interest in the development of this legislation.

The legislation before the Assembly is a comprehensive and genuine attempt to overcome the massive problems which have arisen in respect of workers' compensation. Other states of Australia have been grappling with these same problems. Judging by recent press reports, some of them have had a notable lack of success. This government is prepared to bite the bullet. The rest of Australia could well look at our legislation as a model for their own. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Committee stage to be taken later.

#### MOTOR ACCIDENTS (COMPENSATION) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 241)

Continued from 19 November 1986.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this simple but important legislation. It is basically unifying legislation and, as I understand from the minister's second-reading speech, it complements what is

happening in the states. Optimistically, it will simplify the process of motor vehicle registration, particularly for interstate travellers within the trucking industry. The opposition supports the bill.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I rise to support this bill and the amendment. As the minister said in his second-reading speech, which was confirmed by the opposition, this legislation was agreed to by the Australian Transport Advisory Council Committee and it will provide for uniformity in the road haulage area. It applies to vehicles which will be issued uniform, Commonwealth-registered number plates, and the Motor Vehicle Registry in the Northern Territory will act as agents for the Commonwealth in this regard. The bill creates the need for a contribution to be paid under this system for the purposes of the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act. Those fees will be paid directly into our motor accidents compensation scheme in the Northern Territory.

The provisions within the uniformity arrangements are such that vehicles must register in their state of domicile. There are provisions within this legislation to ensure that, if there is any disparity in the cost of motor accident third-party charges between states, no one state can be overrun with applications covering vehicles from other states wishing to apply for third-party cover. This is important for the Northern Territory which has very low premium charges compared with some of those in the states.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Clause 3:

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 103.1.

Mr Chairman, I understand that paragraph (a) is no longer necessary. There will be a cross-reference to the Commonwealth legislation. I would like to place on record that, although this is a very minor piece of legislation, it has required considerable negotiation and coordination. I compliment the officers of the Office of Parliamentary Counsel that serves this Assembly. Much of the work that they do goes unnoticed and, in this instance, I commend their diligence.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Technology and Communications): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ABORIGINAL SACRED SITES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 156)

Continued from 26 March 1986.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I rise to say a few words about the amendments to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act proposed by the member for Stuart. During the honourable member's second-reading speech, he stated that the government had adopted a cavalier attitude towards sacred sites in the Northern Territory and claimed that it had not respected sacred sites in the past. He gave 2 specific examples, although he did not give much detail. He mentioned an alleged sacred site in Barrett Drive, which supposedly was destroyed, and interference with sacred sites at Billygoat Hill in Alice Springs.

At one stage, in support of his argument, the honourable member said that the Barrett Drive site had been the subject of some negotiation but that the government turned round and bulldozed the site. He stated that, had negotiations continued for a further 6 weeks, the matter would have been resolved. I find it fairly amazing that the honourable member can make a bald statement of that kind - not 3 weeks or 5 weeks, but 6 weeks more of negotiation would have resulted in everyone being satisfied. I do not know what sort of result would have been obtained in that situation because, as I understand it, the government officers had proposed that a road be constructed which would have interfered with this alleged site. The alleged Aboriginal custodians objected to any interference with the site so the officers suggested that the road be diverted around the site. This proposal was rejected on the basis that some trees barred such a diversion. Whilst these trees were not registered as constituting a sacred site, they were of significance. It was said that they were sacred and probably would be the subject of an application in due course. It was the wish of the custodians that the trees not be interfered with. The diversion, which would have involved considerable cost to the taxpayer, was not satisfactory to them anyway.

Another suggestion put forward was that the road be taken over the site. From recollection, the site was perhaps 2 m in depth and there was a possibility of bringing in some fill, putting it on each side and gradually lifting the road over the site, leaving various rocks and so on intact. This proposal also was rejected, although initially it was thought to be a real possibility. I am not sure what made the honourable member feel that a satisfactory resolution would have come from prolonged negotiation. We could not go around it and we could not go over it. I doubt that we could have gone under it because of the rocky nature of the terrain which might have increased the size of the site below ground. However, the honourable member felt that another 6 weeks would have resulted in the matter being resolved amicably. Perhaps, in his reply closing the debate, he could inform us all of the nature of the resolution he envisaged.

I have seen some documentation relating to consultation in relation to work near the Billygoat Hill site. This work was connected with the realignment of the Stuart Highway through Alice Springs - a very important project for Alice Springs and for the future. I understand that the Department of Transport and Works went to very considerable lengths to try to determine Aboriginal wishes in regard to Billygoat Hill prior to commencing work. In fact, it went even so far as to engage the Central Land Council to gather information on its behalf and advise the department. It did that because an approach to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority brought the response that it did not have the resources to do the job itself and perhaps the Department of Transport and Works might seek the views of Aboriginals themselves, which it did through the Central Land Council.



There was indeed a great deal of toing and froing and correspondence on this. However, in his second-reading speech, the honourable member simply said there were dozens of approaches by the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority to the Department of Transport and Works all of which were ignored whilst the bulldozers roared back and forth. I believe that the honourable member has the bull by the tail and certainly has the history of that particular case quite out of context. I believe that the department acted very sensibly and responsibly in regard to the job that it had before it.

It would be foolish for this Assembly to consider adopting the honourable member's proposed amendment to the act. The principal act, in my view, has been demonstrated to be grossly deficient. In recognition of this, the government has established a group of persons to inquire into the act and some actions of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. No doubt, they are undertaking their work now and receiving submissions. I have made a submission myself.

I would like to indicate, however, the fundamental problems that I have with both the act and the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. Although the authority has registered some hundreds of sacred sites in the Northern Territory - and I am having trouble finding out the exact figure - not a single site has been submitted under the act for declaration and the protection that such declaration would provide to such a sacred site. Declaration is the only way under the act that protection of a sacred site can be assured.

One could be forgiven for assuming either that the authority does not consider the alleged sacred sites registered by it to date would stand up to a searching examination or that those sites are not of such significance as would warrant formal protection. One other possible explanation is that the authority does not want any sacred sites declared because that would involve an assessment taking into consideration other interests. It would not be limited to the claimants' views alone.

There are possibly some other motives for the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority not submitting sites for declaration and perhaps honourable members opposite will expound on some of them. I could suggest one more: that the authority does not believe that declaration affords additional protection to a sacred site. If it advocates that, I believe it advocates that either in gross ignorance or facetiously, because it is untrue. For a start, the process of declaration of a sacred site in itself is probably sufficient proof for a court that a site is sacred. The mere registration by the authority of a sacred site is certainly not proof to a court of a site being sacred. It is solely evidence that the Aboriginal Sacred Site Protection Authority believes it was of sufficient sacredness for it to be entered in its register.

As the act stands at present, the authority does not have to bother itself with consideration of whether any other person or indeed the whole community would be disadvantaged by registering the site. The authority is disinterested in effect and the act does not require it to take any interest as to whether an entire subdivision may be stopped as a result of the registration of the site nor the cost to the community in time and money. In deciding on a site proposed for registration, the authority does not have to have regard to the wishes, aspirations or views of the landowner on whose land a site might be situated, be that a private person or the government. It need have no regard for proposed developments, private or government, and no regard for roads, proposed roads or even town plans. The authority, it seems, does

not consider even the views of other Aboriginals. If anyone thinks there are no Aboriginals in Alice Springs, for example, who believe that some of the sites registered by the authority in that town are imaginary, then he is wrong. If any honourable member believes that the presence, size, significance, location and boundaries of an alleged sacred site are simply matters of fact and are not disputed by persons other than the claimants in many cases, I suggest he look into the subject further. An example of that perhaps is the dispute which has arisen about an alleged sacred site near Coronation Hill.

Mr Speaker, I think the government would be crazy to accept this amendment and have this act - in particular, given the way that it is administered at present - bind the Crown. The Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority in fact can conduct its activities virtually in complete secrecy. It cannot be compelled to provide information about its register of sacred sites even to the minister who supposedly is responsible to this Assembly for the authority's very existence. In respect of its register of sacred sites, in respect of the claimants or owners of sacred sites, in respect of the reasons for registration of sacred sites and in respect of the boundaries of sacred sites, the authority is not accountable to any person or body for its actions - not to the minister, not to the government, not to the Administrator, not even to this Assembly. The authority is a law unto itself in regard to its registration procedures and its registration lists for sacred sites.

The sponsor of this proposed amendment suggests we allow the government to be bound by this authority's actions. In my view, and I am expressing a personal view, nobody should be bound by this act until the authority comes to its senses and conducts itself in a manner that is consistent with the intentions of the act. The authority is condemned by its own inaction. That it has not seen fit to propose even one site for declaration of the hundreds it has registered to date is disgraceful and demonstrates a disregard for the Aboriginal sites that it purports to protect.

As honourable members who are familiar with this act are aware, the act provides for 2 stages of action in regard to a sacred site: registration and declaration. Declaration is an activity conducted by the Administrator on reference from the authority. I will quote from section 26 of the act, 'Investigation Before Declaration of a Site'. It indicates that the custodians of sites may ask the authority to take steps to have the sites declared:

(2) The authority may, if it thinks fit, apply to the Administrator to have a sacred site declared a sacred site for the purposes of the act.

(3) Where a request is received under subsection (2), the Administrator shall cause an investigation to be carried out to ascertain -

- (a) the importance of that site to Aboriginal tradition;
- (b) whether the owners, if any, of the land containing the site object to the taking of steps to protect the site;
- (c) whether any other person would be disadvantaged if steps were taken to protect the site;

- (d) whether there is any other person interested in the site and whether that person has any objections to the taking of steps to protect the site; and
- (e) the most appropriate steps that should be taken, having regard to all the circumstances of the case, to protect the site.

Mr Speaker, that is what the true protection of sacred sites is all about. In order to help him along the way with those functions, the Administrator has specific powers in declaring a site to be a declared sacred site: 'Without limiting the power of the Administrator to take steps to protect a sacred site, the Administrator may take or promote or cause to be taken steps under such laws enforced in the Territory as the Administrator considers appropriate, for the acquisition of land'.

That would have to go a long way towards ensuring that a sacred site is truly protected. The Administrator can also take steps for the reservation of an area of Crown land. Again, these are actions that the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority cannot invoke itself and has never attempted to invoke on Crown land. I understand that there have been many sacred sites declared on Crown land. He can also take steps for the vesting of title of an area of Crown land in the authority. I do not believe that the authority has ever asked for an area of Crown land containing a sacred site to be vested in the authority. The Administrator can act to ensure the proper care and protection of a sacred site in the interests of the Aboriginals it is supposed to serve. This power has been in existence for years.

The act also says: 'Where the land is vested in or is under the care, control and management of a statutory corporation, the Administrator may recommend the taking of special measures, including the making of bylaws, for the protection of the site'. Has the authority done any of that? I am sure that a number of sacred sites would certainly have appeared in areas controlled by the Conservation Commission. Where a person has an estate or interest in the land, the Administrator can recommend assistance with the funding of special measures for the protection of the site. If, for example, a sacred site is on private freehold land, the Administrator may recommend that special funding be provided for the protection of that site. That seems eminently sensible.

The act contains a whole series of sections designed to protect sacred sites after a formal examination has been undertaken by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner into the validity of the claim that the site is sacred and after taking into consideration other persons' views and other interests in the area of land concerned. Protection can be afforded to a site in that way, yet not a single site has been proposed for declaration by the authority and there no way of protecting a site except through the authority.

Members opposite would have us believe that this authority is acting genuinely in the interests of the Aboriginal people in having a comprehensive register of sacred sites. But not a single site in the Northern Territory has been declared. That register can be prepared in secret. The act forbids the minister to direct the authority concerning the preparation of the register. It is totally unacceptable, in my view, to propose that the Crown be bound by the actions of this authority. I reject the member's proposed amendment to the legislation.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I am surprised that the member for Fannie Bay has the gall to actually be in the Chamber while this particular

bill is being debated, let alone the gall to actually speak against it. As an erstwhile minister of the Crown and this law-making body, his personal actions embody the notion that we, as members of this Assembly, should not be bound by the very laws we make. That is a contention that is designed to put this Assembly and its deliberations and legislation in contempt in the eyes of everybody out there. I do not believe that any member of this Assembly should be prepared to sit here and listen to what the member for Fannie Bay has to say. I believe he should be covered in shame for the way he has spoken in respect of this particular bill. We heard such a mealy-mouthed load of absolute nonsense, evasion and refusal to address the specific point of this legislation, that I am surprised even the backbenchers on his own side did not interject.

There is a basic principle, and it is the very principle that got rid of the President of the United States, a man holding one of the highest political offices in the Western world. That principle is that no man is above the law. I commend a book to the member for Fannie Bay and I presume that he is literate enough to understand it. It is an excellent account of the Watergate conspiracy by the New York writer, journalist and erstwhile New York councillor, James Breslin. He describes the reaction of Tip O'Neill, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, when he was confronted with the circumstances that eventually led to the demise of Richard Nixon. He referred to that fundamental principle. He said: 'That is right. No man is above the law'. If that is the principle on which the President of the United States can lose his job, surely members of this Assembly and ministers of the Crown should be expected to obey the laws that this Assembly makes.

Mr Perron: They are.

Mr BELL: The fact of the matter is that the only reason that the member for Fannie Bay, the erstwhile Minister for Lands in this Assembly, was able to avoid prosecution was because we did not have this sort of provision in the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act.

Mr Finch: That is rubbish and you know it.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will pick up the interjection from the member for nowhere. Who is it? The member for Wagaman.

Mr Finch: You are displaying your absolute intelligence.

Mr BELL: Let me just point out to the member for Wagaman that I appreciate that Ntjalkentjaneme is about 1000 miles away from Wagaman and probably light years away from the next electorate he is likely to represent.

Mr Finch: Enlighten me with your wisdom.

Mr BELL: I appreciate that he was not a member of this Assembly when this action was actually carried out, but I will just refresh his memory. He may have visited the Sheraton or the casino in Alice Springs and seen, to the right of that long straight stretch of road that joins the two, a relatively unmarked area, a low ridge that represents the body of Yipirinya, of the ancestral Ntjalke caterpillars.

Honourable members will recall that that is the same story which Gus Williams' family at Antaia refers to and, of course, in the context of the Aboriginal view of the world, many of those places are connected. I have no doubt that the associations between those 2 places would be well known to

people. I do not claim to be well acquainted with the Ntjalke story, but I have no doubt of its importance to those people. I have spoken to people such as Gus Williams and Thomas Steven and I understand the depth of their feeling about it. The name of the site was Ntjalkentjaneme, which is 2 words. Ntjalke is a particular caterpillar creature. I am afraid that my knowledge of Aranda does not allow me to be too sure about the difference between ...

Mr Setter: Neither are we.

Mr BELL: I can appreciate that the member for Jingili might not know but I am rather surprised to hear that the member for Sadadeen, within whose electorate these places lie, can possibly interject and suggest ...

Mr D.W. Collins: Hey, get it correct.

Mr BELL: It was not the member for Sadadeen interjecting? I do apologise.

I point out to honourable members that the Ntjalke and the Yipirinya are 2 important beings to people in central Australia. I believe that, in the overall context of growth and building in Alice Springs, it is not only possible but imperative - and of great value, I might say, in the context of visitor attraction - to retain those particular places. I would like to see more information provided about them. A great deal of effort is put into making apparent the European history of the area, involving McDouall Stuart, the telegraph line and so on. For the sake of visitors, we make much of associations with the Old Telegraph Station and the old Stuart jail. The Ghan Preservation Society is very active in highlighting the European history of the area, as you well know, Mr Speaker. I have no doubt that, alongside those attractions, these intensely Australian associations with central Australia are one of the key drawcards for visitors to central Australia. The very fact that these places are alive in a traditional Aboriginal sense is of vital importance. To have them treated in this vandalistic fashion, both metaphorically and physically, by the member for Fannie Bay is a little more than I am prepared to tolerate.

He made a great deal of play about the lack of declaration as opposed to registration of sacred sites. I am aware of the context of the Sacred Sites Act and the provisions with respect to registration and declaration.

Mr Perron: Why haven't they been declared?

Mr BELL: The member for Fannie Bay asks me why they have not been declared. If Aboriginal people are asked to take a government like this into their confidence as far as declaration of sacred sites is concerned, they would have to be very silly to trust it. It is comments such as those from the member for Fannie Bay in this regard that make any such rapprochement between Aboriginal people and the Northern Territory government so very difficult. In the context of other debates, with respect to the association between the Northern Territory government and Aboriginal groups, I have said that, if the Chief Minister wants to advance the course of statehood, he would do very well to get people like his backbench colleague to shut up.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What about democracy?

Mr BELL: I hear the interjection from the member for Koolpinyah. It sounds as though we are about to be regaled by more nonsense of the sort we heard from the member for Fannie Bay.

Mr Speaker, there are a couple of other points that I wish to make for the benefit of honourable members to indicate the feeling amongst certain of the white community in Alice Springs. I would like to point out to honourable members that the driver of the bulldozer, who was responsible for the desecration that the erstwhile Minister for Lands has been able to escape from, was in fact so concerned, so ashamed, that, the day after this occurred, and after there was publicity about this raid on this particular sacred site, he came into my office and said: 'I do not feel too good about this. You have an election campaign on. Here is my day's wages'. That is the depth of feeling of that particular bloke. It is in stark contrast to the absolutely shameless display we have had in this Assembly today from the member for Fannie Bay.

I noticed in an article in the Sunday Territorian of several weeks ago that the member for Fannie Bay wanted dramatic changes to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act. Evidently, he has written to the chairman of the review committee of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act saying that he experienced many frustrations as a minister with the provisions and administration of the act. He said: 'I believe the act as it stands is bad legislation containing a number of fundamental flaws which have led to unwarranted and unintended constraints being placed on development'. The article went on to say: 'Mr Perron identifies 4 main flaws: definition of sacred sites, identification of sacred sites, recognition system and composition of the authority'. He said: 'Definition of a sacred site is the most important issue. In the legislative system established to both record and protect aspects of Aboriginal culture, there clearly has to be accommodation of the degree of significance otherwise the number and size of sacred sites will be such as to become unacceptable to the non-Aboriginal community'.

Mr Speaker, I find it quite extraordinary that the member for Fannie Bay is able to get himself into gear sufficiently to make a submission to the review committee. I do not accept, and I do not believe anybody else in this Assembly should be prepared to accept, that the member for Fannie Bay can possibly endorse the concept that the Crown should be able to be above the law in respect of this legislation or indeed any other legislation. There is no reason why ministers of the Crown should be above the law. I believe that it is incumbent on this Assembly to assent to this legislation. Forget about race relations, forget about Aboriginal sacred sites and the merit of protecting them or whether you register or declare them, the plain fact of the matter is that, if this Assembly makes laws, if we reckon that it is good enough for the bloke out there, if it is good enough for the people who sit in the gallery to listen to us or if it is good enough for the people who write our newspapers, surely to heaven, Mr Speaker, it is good enough for the very members who make the laws.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, after listening to the comments by the member for MacDonnell, I am quite sure that he overheard my earlier comments about the member for Stuart competing for the waffler of the week award because he came rushing in. From his contribution, I can see that it is round 2 of today's competition. This bill attempts to bind the Crown in the right of the Territory in all matters pertaining to sacred sites. That is what it is all about and the member for MacDonnell raised that point earlier. It is my understanding that the current Aboriginal Land Rights Act in no way binds the Crown and yet members opposite are trying to introduce it into the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act. Why is it necessary for us to bind the Crown under Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act? The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, unsatisfactory as it might be, required that the Northern Territory enact complementary legislation. That was done years ago and has been in effect ever since.

This legislation also offers protection to Aboriginal sacred sites of significance. The Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, which has been in operation for a number of years, has proved to be unsatisfactory in its implementation and is currently under review by the Solicitor General who has yet to report. Let me say that many disputes have arisen during this period and a number of decisions taken by the authority have been called into question. Although the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority has been in existence for 8 years, it has never once declared a sacred site as is its right under the act - never once in all those 8 years. Why, Mr Speaker? However, it has moved throughout the Territory registering sacred sites all over the place. I would like to know what criteria it uses to identify those sites. Its methods have been called into question on many occasions. There is no doubt the methods used by the authority should be called into question. I believe it must justify all sites it registers and those sites must be declared under the act, as is its right.

Mr Speaker, I believe the composition of the authority needs to be modified. It currently consists of a number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people with experience in this area. I believe the following issues need to be addressed. First, let us have a look at the composition of the authority. As I mentioned a moment ago, it has some Aboriginal people and some white people - I prefer to call them Australians - who have some experience in this matter. We learn from the Turner Report that Aboriginals are not just one great mass of people. They can be divided into skin groups and tribal groups and those groups do not necessarily have affiliations with each other. In fact, in most cases, they certainly do not. However, when we look at the composition of the authority, we find that there are Aboriginal people on that authority who come from all over the Northern Territory. That means that many of those Aboriginals have no traditional affiliations with each other. I am quite sure that the member for Arnhem could confirm that point.

I understand also from the Turner Report that, when a sacred site or something of sacred significance is being considered, the Aboriginal people who do not come from the skin group area in which that site is located are not permitted to consider it. In other words, it is sacred within that particular skin group and, therefore, Aboriginals outside that skin group are not permitted, under tribal law, to address any issues relating to that sacred site. That immediately cancels out quite a number of people on that authority when it comes to considering a particular sacred site. That is an unsatisfactory situation. I believe we have a situation where, in most cases, the report handed down by the Director of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority is virtually accepted out of hand because there is almost nobody on the board of the authority who can dispute the recommendation of the director.

Let us look at the definition of a 'sacred site'. At the moment, we have a sacred site and that's it. There is no degree of significance or degree of sacredness of a site and I am led to understand from the Turner Report that there certainly is a degree of significance relating to sacred sites. You have sites which are indeed extremely significant and sacred to certain groups of Aboriginal people and yet there are others which are far less sacred. I believe that we need to qualify the degree of significance of the various sites. That is a very important point.

Mr Speaker, let us have a look at the identification of a site. When the authority identifies a site, how does it go about it? Does it accept the fact there is a site there and erect a sign saying, 'Sacred site. Please do not enter'. Is that the current system? I understand I am not too far from the

truth. I believe that we must improve the method of identification of a sacred site after considering the degree of its significance.

The method of recognition of a sacred site is another issue to which we need to address ourselves; for example, registration, identification and declaration under the act. At the moment, anybody can register a sacred site. As far as I know, there is no requirement that claims be justified and no consideration is given to the effect of the registration of a site on other people, other places and future development. In other words, a person can simply indicate to the authority that there is a sacred site on his property or in a certain place, present the details and that is the end of the story.

I am led to believe that the authority may visit the alleged site and record its location and physical details in a register for future reference. But that is the extent of the investigation. That is the end of the story; it is in the register, and that is it. Once registered, the site is out of bounds to all and sundry. The site has been identified, recorded in the register, a sign has been installed, and the site is completely out of bounds to everybody, apart from the traditional owners. Any further development related to that site ceases at that point.

I believe we must ensure that, in future, the method of operation of the authority be modified so that the claims are investigated to confirm that areas are indeed sacred sites. That means that the authority should talk to the traditional owners and do all that is necessary to confirm that the site is a sacred site. The degree of sacredness of the site should be researched and, if found to be justified, objections to or comments on its registration should be called for by means of a public notice. Those objections and comments should then be considered at a special hearing. If the authority accepts that the area is indeed a sacred site, it should then be registered and declared by the Administrator. That is the sequence of events that should be followed. I believe that penalties should apply then to all those who defile legitimately declared sacred sites. There is no question about that; I have no hesitation in supporting such a position.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased that a review of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority is under way, because its past operations and actions have not always been in the best interests of all Territorians. This issue needed to be addressed. There is a positive role for the authority to play, and I trust the final outcome of the inquiry will ensure that that will occur in the future. In my opinion, there is no justification for the introduction of this bill by the opposition, and I oppose it.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the amendments proposed by the member for Stuart. I commend the intention of the amendment and also the member for MacDonnell for his speech emphasising that people responsible for the passage of legislation through this Assembly should be bound by that legislation. A classic example occurred when the member for Fannie Bay came very close to being prosecuted under the very act we are talking about. I believe the incident happened in Alice Springs. That is why I would urge the government members to support this bill.

Mr Speaker, I want to take some time to talk about some of the more important aspects of the activities of the authority which I believe was established under legislation introduced by the Northern Territory government during the Everingham era to complement the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976. At that stage, the Aboriginal people accepted that legislation. We welcomed it with open arms because it related to matters



affecting people in the Northern Territory in terms of the protection, definition and declaration of sacred sites. Aboriginal people believe that is in their interest, not only in respect of protecting the integrity of a site, but also because, in our understanding, those areas of land give us spiritual and ceremonial responsibility for what will happen eventually if that land is desecrated by developments that may occur on it.

I remember the old days when the mining company was being established at Nhulunbuy. Nabalco fought a very long and hard battle in the High Court for its own interests. Everyone can remember that. That was the first time that the validity of Aboriginal relationship to land was challenged in the High Court. From that court case came an understanding by Europeans of the way in which Aboriginal people regard their sites.

Mr Speaker, I believe that you know that there is an old banyan tree smack dab in the middle of the industrial area at Nhulunbuy which the Aboriginal people fought very hard for during the late 1960s and early 1970s. They fought as hard as they could to protect that old banyan tree and it is now protected - not by legislation - but through the relationship that has developed between the Aboriginal people and Nabalco, and its understanding that it is mining on Aboriginal land. That was facilitated by Commonwealth legislation prior to the enactment of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act. I believe that Mr Justice Woodward was the first person to recommend that those sites be protected.

Another example is the Mt Brockman area. 250 people participated in negotiations with Ranger and Nabalco. People were dragged from camps and outstations throughout the whole of the East Alligator area to discuss a matter as important to the nation, and to themselves, as a site of significance. Mt Brockman, which is also known as Djibidjibi, is very important to people like Toby Gangala, Nick Alderson and Big Bill Neidje. They would like to see that place protected because to them that land is dreaming and was given to them long ago. They do not want to see those places destroyed. In fact, I understand that Toby Gangala became very ill during the negotiation stages for the mining at Ranger. The reason why I am arguing this afternoon in respect of this amendment is because we are talking about legislation that affects 30% of the people in the Northern Territory.

It is important that the honourable members on the other side of the Assembly understand why such an amendment is being introduced by the member for Stuart. We heard his arguments and the arguments of the member for MacDonnell concerning the need for it. It relates not only to the protection of a site. Aboriginal people will not declare sites simply for the sake of declaring sites; they will not do that.

The authority is comprised of departmental officers and, as the member for Jingili said, people from the Top End who have no interest whatever in sites down in Alice Springs. Alice Springs people sometimes feel embarrassed to show their sacred, ceremonial, significant land to people in the Top End. The composition of the authority has to be looked at. There may be ways in which we could satisfy those people by saying that, if there are sites in the northern part of the Northern Territory, the people from the Top End review and make recommendations through the authority to declare those. There may be people down in the southern part of the Territory who might want to declare sites and people representing the people in that area should make recommendations in relation to those.

I have had discussions with the Northern Land Council concerning sites. People in Arnhem Land, I believe, are the luckiest people of all. Their land at the moment is protected under the Land Rights Act and they can ask the authority to register a site only if they see the need for it because, for example, there is a tourism development in their area. For them to argue to have those sites registered is totally different compared to those in the pastoral properties. The pastoral people have to ensure that they are identified as traditional landowners for a specific area prior to their convincing the authority that it should register their site. It is a very hard and strenuous exercise for people - not people of my age but people who are older - for the first time in their life, to express to an authority what their dreaming is.

I myself have not reached the stage where I would be able to stand up and dispute the arguments that I might have with my people in Arnhem Land about the sites that are significant to me. It is much more difficult for an older person, especially when he feels very frustrated or emotionally upset, to be able to stand up in front of a few white faces and a few black faces and show them on a map where his track is, where his dreaming is. How is he going to pick up a piece of paper, Mr Speaker, and outline to you just where his area is?

That is the type of support we need from government agencies and the minister who may be responsible for this act. I would urge honourable members opposite to take into account the amendment that the member for Stuart has introduced. The other aspect that the member for MacDonnell touched on is that 30% of the people in the Northern Territory sometimes benefit from legislation that is being passed by this Assembly. If the minister concerned is not bound by the legislation, there will be a hell of a lot of mistrust amongst my people about this type of legislation. I refer to 30% of the total population of the Northern Territory. How is that going to help the Chief Minister's statehood arguments? How am I going to stand up in Lake Evella, Angurugu, Galiwinku and all those other places and ask people to support the Northern Territory government in its bid for statehood when we are actually damaging their right to be able to declare sites of significance to them, the sites that they believe have been given to them by their ancestral beings. That is what we are testing here, Mr Speaker. I would therefore commend the amendment proposed by the member for Stuart.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, can I take the opportunity to congratulate the member for Arnhem. It is the first time in this Assembly for some time that we have heard some rational and reasonable argument on the question of sacred sites. Let me assure the member for Arnhem that I support many of the sentiments that he expressed in his speech today. He will be aware of the concerns that I have expressed about a number of the aspects of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, the methods of operation, the determination of what constitutes sacred sites, the processes that they go through, the constitution of the authority, and a multitude of issues surrounding the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority and the act as it operates now. Whilst I was minister responsible for that act, and I might say with the advice of the director of the authority and after talking to Aboriginal people, I came to the conclusion that that act did not reasonably reflect a process of decision-making and determination that would be comfortable with the traditional decision-making and communication lines within the Aboriginal communities.

Mr Speaker, the member for Arnhem used a very simple but stark example of people from central Australia talking about their sites with people from the

Top End and vice versa. I am sure that the honourable member would agree that there are different levels of protection that apply to different sites. They have different significance and different purposes in respect of access or even identification. I do not dispute that at all. I fully support those sentiments of the member for Arnhem which is the very reason why we instituted a review of the authority. That review is not meant to be a short-term political stunt. It was done with a genuine desire on my part to ensure that the act is reviewed fully and comprehensively to ensure that it provides proper and appropriate protection to sites and that procedures can be developed that conform as closely as possible to Aboriginal custom and tradition.

Mr Speaker, the second issue, and the one that this bill particularly deals with, is whether the Crown should be bound by the act. The point that I dispute with the member for Arnhem is whether the passage of this particular amendment would have any direct impact on the trust or otherwise of the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory government. I accept the view that the passing of this provision would increase the level of trust but I dispute that its non-passage would decrease the level of trust with Aboriginal people.

I say that for the following reason. Honourable members may be very interested to know that, currently, the sacred site provisions under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act specifically do not bind the Crown. That has not led to a level of distrust between the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal people over the years of operation of that act. There are many other things that have led to distrust between the minister, whomever he happened to be from time to time, and the Aboriginal people, but not that provision.

I might say that I am aware that the amendments that are currently before the federal parliament provide that those sections will bind the Crown. I note that, but I make the point to the member for Arnhem that the absence of that binding did not create any trust or distrust. What is most important is that there is a factual and practical protection for Aboriginal sites and that the identification and protection of those sites is done in a way that does not cause embarrassment or hardship for Aboriginal people but provides security for them.

That is what the legislation should be aiming for. I do not believe it does that at the moment. I believe there needs to be significant changes in administrative procedures and the methods of operation of that act. That is why that review is in place. I do not believe it is appropriate to fiddle with that legislation in the middle of that review. It could be well dealt with in the context of the review of the legislation as a whole and I believe it is a matter that should properly be dealt with at that time. It is the view of the government that there should not be amendments, innocuous or otherwise, to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act in the middle of the review.

Mr Speaker, I say that that matter should be referred to the review committee, and I make the point to honourable members opposite that there is no evidence that the inclusion or non-inclusion of this clause will in any way detrimentally affect the ability of that act to operate. The main reason there is difficulty in the operation of this act right now is the total failure of the authority to proceed to the declaration of even 1 site. That act provides the strongest protection to Aboriginal people, and the strongest opportunity to minimise embarrassment to Aboriginal people in the protection of their sites by the process of declaration. But it has never been exercised.

In the last 12 months or more, we have seen examples where the authority instituted prosecutions for alleged breaches of registered sacred sites, and Aboriginal people, the authority and other persons have had to front up in a court of law to prove that those sites were sacred sites. I might say that, on at least one occasion, they were not able to prove that a location was a sacred site. In fact, in one particular case, the Aboriginal custodians stood up in the court and said that the location was not the site it was said to be and that they had advised the authority that the site was somewhere else. It is important to understand that. What should have been occurring is that the act should have been operating and, through the process of declaration under the act, those locations would be deemed to be sacred sites for the purpose of any prosecution, and no one would ever have to stand up and prove the existence or otherwise of a site and the location and importance of that site.

Mr Speaker, there is so much to be done with that act, but let us do the whole job and do it properly. Let us stop playing politics with the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, have it assessed and introduce some legislation that we can all respect. Then let us make it work in the interests of the Territory, particularly in the interest of that 30% of the Northern Territory community that the honourable member for Arnhem referred to. An amendment of this nature is not relevant to that objective at this time. There is no evidence of a need for this particular legislative amendment and, on that basis, the government will oppose it.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I had not intended to speak in this debate, but I was struck by a statement made by the member for MacDonnell that no man is above the law. He went on to give examples, such as Richard Nixon and others, that we are well aware of. I wonder if he would apply the same logic to Mr Ellis, the Director of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority, and to that statutory body. Many members have stated here, quite correctly, that the authority has only registered sites. They may have been subjected to tests, but those tests have been shrouded in secrecy. I listened to the speech of the member for Arnhem with interest and I am not insensitive to the ideas that he put forward. However, I would say to the honourable member that where you have secrecy, you will also have suspicion.

As we know, there has not been 1 attempt to have a registered sacred site declared. Again, the non-Aboriginal section of the community feels fairly suspicious about that because, if declaration is not sought for a site, it is not subject to the testing which the act allows. If those claiming an area to be a sacred site seek to have it declared as such, then people can lodge objections to it and the whole issue can be thrashed out. I understand what the member for Arnhem means when he says that that requires things to be discussed that are very personal to people involved and that they do not like doing it but, by the same token, the rest of the community cannot be ignored. There are 2 sides to the coin and the other side, the community, needs to be heard.

Mr Speaker, no doubt you were in the Assembly when the sacred sites legislation was passed. I do not believe that any member on either side of the Assembly thought at that time that the legislation would be taken only part way. I would suggest that every member at the time fully believed that registration would automatically lead to declaration and the testing of the validity of the claim that a site was sacred. We have an unintended consequence, something which the authority and its director have been able to play to their own advantage. In so doing, I believe they have done a grave disservice to Aboriginal people because they have not proceeded from registration to testing. Clearly, that would need to be done with

sensitivity, as the Chief Minister has agreed, but still it needs to be done. I would have far less concern with this motion to bind the Crown if these sites had been declared, challenged and determined. One would feel less inclined to oppose the motion then. However, I am damned if I feel that I can support a setup where anybody can claim registration of a site. I agree that many sites are very significant, but when I recall the member for MacDonnell saying in this Assembly that he had studied some of the Strehlow writings on sacred sites and every rock, every tree and bush that comes up from a seed, even a seed from Europe that had been planted and came up, could be declared to be of significance to Aboriginal people, I feel there has to be some logic, some common sense ...

Mr Ede: You are talking rubbish.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Well, it was said by the member for MacDonnell.

As for the suggestion by the member for MacDonnell that the reason sites have not gone to declaration is because nobody in their right mind would trust this government, that might hold some water if a few attempts had been made and the government had fought them tooth and nail. However, there has not been a single attempt to have a site declared. I believe that, until such an attempt is made, the suspicion in the general community about sacred sites will remain. Sacred sites do tend to pop up wherever development goes. Maybe, in one sense, that is inevitable; sometimes they seem to be so jolly convenient.

Not all alleged sacred sites are undisputed. No doubt one that the member for Brainting would have heard about many times is Dunlop Hill in Alice Springs. People who were in Alice Springs during the last war said the hill was created with bulldozers by the army. I cannot say if that is true or not, but it is a story that is told. There are areas which have been claimed to be sacred sites that are under challenge and often that challenge comes from Aboriginal people themselves. While this secrecy persists and the authority will not proceed from registration to declaration and while the thoughts of the rest of the Territory community are ignored, there is no way that I can support this bill to bind the Crown.

Mr DONDAS (Lands): Mr Speaker, I rise to place on record my opposition to the amendments proposed in this bill, and pick up some points made by the member for Stuart in his second-reading speech. The honourable member gave us some examples of incidents in relation to sacred sites. He also criticised the government for adopting a cavalier attitude towards the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act. This debate is very timely at 6.15 pm today. At this very moment, a function is being held at the MLC Building by the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. I am sure that the honourable member would have been invited to that function, which is to celebrate the opening of its new premises.

We are all aware that the main thrust of the member for Stuart's proposed amendment to the sacred sites legislation concerns the binding of the Crown. We are all aware that a review of the authority is presently under way and that it is due to be completed in the near future. Whilst the member for Stuart has a point when he says that there could be some desecration by a government department in the performance of its duties, I do not believe that we can afford to support his proposed amendment because there might be some exceptional circumstances. I am not saying that we will do what the member suggested in his second-reading speech. However, there may be some exceptional circumstances brought about because of community interests. If

the member for Stuart and other members opposite feel so strongly, why don't they refer their amendment to the review committee? I think that would be a start.

The member for Arnhem referred to the problem of the composition of the authority. I referred to it myself in this Assembly earlier this year. The problem is that people from various parts of the Territory are required to evaluate sites in places they are completely unfamiliar with. I may even have suggested then that, when a particular area being discussed did not relate to another Aboriginal member, that person could actually divorce himself from the proceedings in one way or another by leaving the room, closing his eyes or whatever. The member for Arnhem has highlighted that problem. Perhaps during the review we will have to look at the composition of the authority. I would remind the member for Arnhem that the chairmanship of the authority rotates between the northern and southern regions of the Territory. The authority is comprised of 4 departmental heads, 4 European members and 7 Aboriginal members. However, the act does not insist that I appoint any of those other 4 or that I appoint an Aboriginal chairman. Common sense dictates that a minister would do that.

There are problems with the authority and its legislation and these have been highlighted in this parliament on many occasions. The point I am trying to make is that members of the opposition who have views about the workings and performance of the authority should put their case before the review committee.

Mr Bell: Tell us whether you should be allowed to break the law, Nick.

Mr DONDAS: I did not say anyone should be allowed to break the law.

Mr Bell: If you are going to knock this off, that is what you are doing.

Mr DONDAS: I did not say that at all. The point is that there is a review. I suggest to members opposite that they place their submissions before the review committee. Let us see what will happen and perhaps, early next year, we will be able to discuss it further. We all know that there are problems with the legislation in its existing form and making piecemeal amendments now will not help.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I really am most disappointed about this. I would have thought, especially with the approach of statehood at this stage in our history, that it would have been incumbent upon the government to make this commitment to sacred sites and to pass this legislation. But all we have had is a series of wildly ridiculous statements, mixed in with a couple of points that I will take up in more detail.

Before I do that, I will refer to the member from Fannie Bay and his statements because, through his actions, he more than any other person has been responsible for the breakdown of the confidence which Aboriginal people initially had. When he was Minister for Lands, he ordered the bulldozing of the Ntjalkentjaneme site on Barrett Drive in Alice Springs and that destroyed any confidence of the people of central Australia that their rights would be protected.

Mr Dondas: Why did they withdraw the court action?

Mr EDE: They withdrew the court action when it was discovered that this act does not bind the Crown.

Mr Bell: You are responsible for it, Nick. You should know.

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr EDE: I do not believe that people were initially aware that this act does not bind the Crown. The presumption was that it does. This fact was highlighted during the course of the legal action which the traditional owners attempted to take. I think that, if that had been realised when the legislation was being drafted, it would probably would have been amended at that stage. The idea that the government would have legislation which was not binding upon itself was a fairly strange one in my view. The member for Fannie Bay has been trying to give a legal opinion concerning when a site is sacred. He referred to the declaration process and whether registration necessarily means that a particular site is sacred or whether it does not. That is a matter of legal argument which has been discussed before the courts. However, even if his argument were correct and only declared sites actually were sacred sites, he should be prepared to support this amendment. He must surely agree that sites should be sites in respect of which the Crown should be bound. The authority, however, deals with matters of fact. It assumes, having investigated a site and found it to be sacred, that under its legislation this becomes a matter of fact, as it does under the Land Rights Act.

I was most disconcerted by the call of the member for Fannie Bay. He said that it was a personal call but it does give us an idea of his attitude to legislation and to this Assembly. He called on people to break the law of the Northern Territory. He said that nobody should be bound by this legislation and that anybody should be able to break the law.

Mr Perron: I did not call on them to break the law. I simply said that the law is not good enough.

Mr EDE: It is disgusting and I think that, if I had more time and more respect for the honourable member, I would have taken him before the Privileges Committee for daring to rise in this Assembly to suggest that the people of the Northern Territory should disregard legislation that has been passed through this Assembly.

The member for MacDonnell explained that the Aboriginal sites, stories and dreamings are an essential part of the character of the land. For us as Territorians to deny or disrespect the Aboriginality of the land is not to know the land. To deny or to disrespect the sites, to not provide them with the protection that they deserve, is to deny the land itself. As a Territorian, I do not deny the sacred sites that are the fundamental bones upon which this Northern Territory exists. They are an essential component of our land.

The member for Jingili appeared to be taking credit for the passage of the legislation even though he then went on to heap scorn upon the authority. It was a requirement that the Territory government should pass legislation of this nature as part of the total package of land rights at the time of self-government. It is unfortunate that the government's history in the passage of the legislation is not a pretty one. Its first draft was rejected by a committee in the national parliament which found it completely unsatisfactory. It then delayed the passage of the bill through the Assembly for 2 years. Having finally passed the legislation, it delayed the commencement of the act for another year. Then, having finally been forced into commencing the legislation, it delayed the setting up of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority for another year on top of that.

In 1981, it attempted to amend the law drastically to curtail the protection of sacred sites in towns. In 1983, it amended the act to give the Northern Territory minister the power to give directions to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. Honourable members will remember that the minister directed that signs protecting sacred sites were to be taken down. It then attempted to curtail the protection of sacred sites. In 1985, it attempted illegally to dismiss the director of the authority. That, unfortunately, is the history of the Northern Territory government's attitude towards this legislation, quite apart from the way it has authorised the destruction of sites.

In the debate, the member for Arnhem spoke passionately about the difficulty of protection and the need for protection. Many people have discussed with me the real problem they have with sites which are as secret as they are sacred, and the need for people to make a decision between the secrecy, the sacredness and the protection of those sites. As you know Mr Speaker, people have likened the distribution of sites along a dreaming trail down in our area to knots on a piece of string. The relationships between the custodians of other sites along particular dreaming trails are very complex and very important. Their responsibility is for the protection of the sites, the maintenance of the ceremonies and often the maintenance of the secrecy of the sites.

What often happens is that, when people in a particular area see that development is about to occur, they have to make a decision about how they can maintain the secrecy but also ensure protection of the sacred site. That entails very difficult decisions. People have to go to other custodians along the dreaming trail to explain that the site is under protection and ask their permission to reveal secrets. There are quite horrendous punishments in traditional law associated with the giving up of these secrets. The people have to try to convince other custodians that they have to make these concessions to the modern-day world and give up a degree of secrecy to be able to ensure that they obtain some degree of protection.

The member for Arnhem spoke of possible changes to the authority. We on this side have stated that it probably is time that a review of the legislation was carried out. Our problem with the current review is that it is being carried out by public servants, and we do not believe that public servants are the appropriate people to do this.

I would like to speak further on the contribution of the Chief Minister who unfortunately made a very common error in his discussion of sacred sites. He talked about different levels of importance. I constantly have this argument put to me and it is actually a misconception. It is not a matter of different levels of importance between various sites but a difference in the nature of the sites. The fact that people may enter a site does not make it less significant than a site where that is not permitted. It simply means that it has a different type of significance. There are different laws that apply to different sites. Some may relate to access, some may relate to things that can be done around the site, some may relate to the area covered by the site, and all these things are not necessarily a measure of levels of importance but of differences in the essential nature of the site.

The Chief Minister stated that opposing this amendment would be all right in that it would not destroy his credibility. I think that is quite an amazing assertion. The Chief Minister has been travelling around the Northern Territory talking to Aboriginal groups and I commend him for that discussion. Today, he has said that he will ensure that the government defeats this bill



and that the government will not be bound by this legislation. He will refuse that essential and natural degree of protection to those sites by defeating the bill. In spite of that, he believes he can go out with his head held high and tell Aboriginal people that he supports protection of sacred sites and Aboriginal land rights. It is obvious that he will not be able to get away with that.

Mr Speaker, I would like to talk about the process of declaration. The problem with the process of declaration after registration is apparent if it is looked at from the point of view of traditional owners who have seen this government destroy sacred sites, have lost their belief in this government and who do not believe that the government is serious about protection. Various things have to be taken into account for declaration. Basically, if nobody objects and everybody is in agreement, then a site can be declared. All the elements involved, from the process of registration through the process of declaration, give the message to custodians that they do not have any power and the sites themselves do not carry sufficient weight on their own to deserve the protection which the government says it would like to provide. The essential nature of these sites does not guarantee them that protection unless nobody is inconvenienced by them. That is what the whole process boils down to in the final analysis. Essentially, it would result in a Cabinet decision because the Administrator acts on the advice of Cabinet which does not enjoy the confidence of the custodians.

As I said before, the additional problem of the secrecy of sites comes in between registration and declaration. At the moment, the method utilised is that, when sites are registered, they are held on what has been referred to here as a secret register.

Mr Perron: They have big signs stuck all over the countryside - that is not very secret.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, obviously the member for Fannie Bay is not aware of the instruction issued by the previous Chief Minister that those signs be removed.

Mr Perron: I am well aware, but it went against the theory that they are all secret.

Mr EDE: Once again, he has demonstrated his lack of ignorance of the difference in the nature ...

Mr Perron: I will accept that.

Mr EDE: ... his ignorance of the different nature of various sites. Secrecy is one of the essential differences between sites, which does not mean that there is a ranking in importance; it means a difference in the site's nature, but I digress.

Mr Speaker, people feel it will be extremely difficult to maintain the degree of secrecy that is essential from the point of registration to the point of declaration. To be perfectly honest, it would be almost impossible because of the process necessary to determine whether landowners or anybody else has any possible problem with declaration proceeding. That would mean that no secrecy would be left for any site except perhaps those on schedule 1 land. People feel that, on schedule 1 land, they have a degree of protection already. It is not particularly common, at least down our way, to find sites that are even registered when they are on schedule 1 land, because people feel

that they have a sufficient degree of protection. The people can provide it themselves on that land and further protection is provided under the Land Rights Act. However, outside of that land, when we start talking about Crown land, private land or whatever, the secrecy would have to go out the window. That is matter that I hope the review committee will take into account, because it is a major problem. Even though a site may not be under threat, people recognise that an essential component of its nature will be lost through the process, and that is a very hard thing for them to accept.

Mr Speaker, it is obvious from the actions of the Northern Territory government today that its members do not realise the essential nature of sacred sites and how they relate to people's belief in the spirituality of the land. As I said, the land can be likened to the body and the sacred sites to the skeleton; they bind the spirituality of the land together. If the sacred sites are taken out of the land, the spiritual affinity which Aboriginal people have with the land is no longer there because the spiritual affinity is built from the sites that are on the land. It is obvious that this government has not accepted that. If it had, the Chief Minister would not travel around making statements about the degree of protection the people's land will have after statehood, of the protection to be afforded to their land rights, the title they will have and the tenure of that title, and he would not attempt to convince people that they need not fear statehood when he has not taken into account the essential element in the whole issue of land rights: the sacred sites. If the government will not bind itself on that essential element, if it will not say to people that it will provide protection to the extent that the government itself will not destroy sacred sites, then people will be very doubtful of anything else that the government says on this issue.

The most fundamental point about this legislation was raised by the member for MacDonnell: no man should be above the law. This government has set itself above the law. It has passed legislation, through this Assembly, and refuses to be bound by it. It says that others are to be bound by it. Everybody else is to be bound by this legislation, but not the government. I believe that that is an indication of a degree of contempt for this Assembly, because that legislation was not passed by the government but by this Assembly. It has that stature.

Mr Speaker, the final point I want to make relates to the people who did not speak in this debate. I would like to place it on record that we will divide on this legislation because, Mr Speaker, you will have noticed that the Minister for Community Development, apart from his statements about breaking people's arms, was talking a few days ago about Aboriginal self-management. He was talking about responsibilities that had been transferred to his department and that he had the answers. Nevertheless, he did not speak in this debate. However, he need not think that he can duck the issue. His name will appear in the Hansard because we are going to call for a division. What is worse is that the only frontbench member of the government who represents an electorate which has a substantial Aboriginal component in it thought that he could hide behind the fact that he would not rise in this debate to state his attitude towards binding his government to the the sacred sites legislation.

I will ensure that the people of his electorate know how he votes when we come to divide. This is not the first time. I will continue to advise the people in the member for Victoria River's electorate of the attitude he takes in relation to land rights and the protection of sacred sites. From what I can make out, he does not tell them how he votes on issues like this. I think that they have a right to know whether he has the intestinal fortitude to cross the floor ...

Mr McCarthy: I don't see why I should.

Mr EDE: ... and vote for the government to protect the sacred sites of the people in his area.

He just said that he doesn't know why he should. He should be ashamed of himself, representing an electorate such as his, if he doesn't know why he should. He doesn't know why he should insist that this government be bound by this legislation, that this government protect sacred sites and that it does not bulldoze sacred sites as it has done in the past. He doesn't know why he should stand up for that. I am sure that there are many people in Port Keats, Kalkaringi and Dagaragu who will be very interested to hear the view of the member.

Mr McCarthy: How many copies of Hansard will you need, Brian?

Mr EDE: I will have enough, Mr Speaker. Word will spread like wildfire when we get the message out on the attitudes of the honourable minister. I believe that the people have a right to know how their members vote. The Aboriginal constituents of the member for Barkly no longer have any faith in him in this regard because they know how he probably votes on such issues. However, there are Aboriginal people in the member for Victoria River's electorate who retain some faith in him and some hope, apart from the fact that he is a member of the CLP, that there actually is some moral fibre or integrity in the man. I am afraid that they will be sadly disillusioned. I hope that there will be some people who will cross the floor because this is a fundamental amendment. It is an amendment to have this government state that it will be bound by its legislation. It is an amendment which will have this government state that it believes in and will be bound by the provisions of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act. It is an amendment where this government has a chance to make a statement about its belief in sacred sites, about its belief in Aboriginal people, about its belief in their culture and about its belief in their position in the Northern Territory. If this government opposes this amendment, it will be to its eternal shame and I will make sure that Aboriginal people throughout the Northern Territory know it.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

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

Noes 18

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

Motion negatived.

#### DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Mrs Nonumalo Sofara, wife of the Speaker of the Parliament of Western Samoa. On behalf of all honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to Mrs Sofara and hope that her stay in the Northern Territory will be a pleasant one.

Members: Hear, hear!

#### ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 178)

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to this legislation this afternoon, I do not quite know where to start. I will not say that it is stupid legislation but it is kind of a nothing piece of legislation and, considering it as such, I do not suppose one should spend too much time on it.

Mr Speaker, elections have been held in the Northern Territory since 1947. In all that time, I have not heard of any serious charges of financial misconduct levelled at anyone in any party or even at any independent candidate in any election for the previous Legislative Council and the current Legislative Assembly. Considering that this is 1986, that is quite a few years.

Elections come and go. Members of political parties raise money, work hard and help their party candidates in any way they can to be successful at the polls. I cannot understand why this legislation is necessary 39 years after the first election when there has been no malfeasance whatsoever to warrant its introduction now. When one considers the particularities of this legislation and how it imposes a big brother government on us, I would say that, if it were passed, it would not have Buckley's chance of being implemented. The people in the Northern Territory do not want this sort of legislation that implies a big brother attitude. In order not to be sexist, I should say big sister too but that brings to mind those tinned Christmas puddings. Therefore, I will say big brother - looking over one's shoulder with every little thing one does leading up to an election or even from one election to another.

I will say one thing for it, Mr Speaker. It would create myriads of jobs, and I use that word in its true sense. However, this legislation is unnecessary because there has been no wrongdoing in the past and I cannot envisage any occurring in the future in respect of donations to political parties. I have never heard of any bribery being offered in the Northern Territory and I have never heard of any blackmail occurring. I have never heard of any kickbacks being offered or being expected. I have not heard of any funny business whatsoever and I include the Labor Party in that too. Having been around for as long as I have, I hear things about people, whether they are in the ALP or the CLP. If there has been no funny business, no bribery, no blackmail, no kickbacks of any sort in relation to political parties, why do we need this legislation?

One way of looking at this legislation is that it is the result of somebody's nose being out of joint at something. As this bill has been introduced by the opposition, obviously it is directed against the CLP.

Mr B. Collins: Rubbish! What an absurd proposition.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: That is my view. You will have your opportunity to put your views. Does someone in the ALP fear that we in the CLP are more fortunate in gaining enthusiastic support from the people of the Northern Territory? Is this legislation an attempt to redress the perceived inequality by putting strictures on all supporters in order to inhibit that support?

I believe that this legislation - I have not checked this exactly - is a pretty fair copy of the federal legislation if not a direct lift. I will turn to the detail of the bill. The definition of 'gift' is rather unusual and it does not seem to make much sense. A gift means 'any disposition of property made by a person to another person, otherwise than by will, being a disposition made without consideration in money or money's worth or with inadequate consideration, and includes the provision of a service (other than volunteer labour) for no consideration or for inadequate consideration'. If you are considering work that somebody does for a political party and it does not include volunteer labour but work for a fee, how can that be a gift? I cannot understand that. Perhaps the honourable sponsor can explain that ambiguity. The definition of a 'political party' is okay as far as it goes but I am surprised that, in the definitions, there was no mention made of an independent.

Mr Speaker, if this legislation were in force, we would have had to have filled in 4 forms by the end of page 5. One thing that I hate doing is filling in forms and I think I speak for most people in the community. The first form that has to be filled in relates to proposed section 102C, the second to 102D, the third to 102E and the fourth to 102F. By the time we get to page 13, goodness knows how many forms would be involved.

Proposed section 102G refers to disclosure of gifts. It demands a monumental amount of detail about every time some party member came into the party headquarters to stick up envelopes for 20 minutes or so. I am using these amendments to sections in the current act to show how ridiculous this legislation is and the ridiculous detail required that would make the whole exercise counter-productive. The person's name would have to be noted, the time spent, the task undertaken - sticking up envelopes or vacuuming the floor or whatever - and the value of the time assessed.

Do we value the time on the basis of the person's normal occupation or as a volunteer party worker or do we value it on the basis of the job done? Do we write down all the relevant details, giving the amount of the worker's compensation insurance, public risk insurance or any other insurance or expense? We must remember that this person has volunteered his time. Because the definition of 'gift' is so ambiguous, we cannot be certain whether this person is employed by the party or doing the work as a gift. Do we give the net value of the gift or do we give the gross value of the gift?

I could go on and on with all the stupid detail that would be necessary as a result of this person doing 20 minutes work. The relevant details might include the cost of the volunteer's use of a private car to travel to party headquarters. One might say that this 20 minutes work would be valued at much less than the \$200 which is the amount mentioned over which details have to be submitted. However, if this person is an active worker, I can see him easily doing more than \$200 worth of work. On the off chance that somebody may tot up more than \$200 worth, every single person who works at party headquarters over the year would have to be noted.

If somebody gives an anonymous donation of \$50, that is okay. If \$51 or more is received, all the details surrounding the gift must be notified. If the party does not know who the donor is, does it notify the police that somebody has slipped an envelope under the door with \$51 in it so the police have to find out who the donor is or does the party employ private detectives to find out the person's name and address and whether the person used a car to drop off this cheque. All of these things would have to be noted to fulfil the requirements of this legislation. All of this may sound farfetched but this legislation would require it if it became law. Think of all the extra people that political party headquarters would have to employ to note all the details surrounding even a simple visit just to pass the time of day.

Mr Speaker, I do not like to see anomalies in any legislation. Proposed section 102G refers to a time of 20 weeks and proposed section 102H refers to 15 weeks. I cannot understand why these periods should be different. I do not know what would happen if a new political party was formed between one election and another. I do not know whether this legislation would cover it. As soon as the political party is formed, it would not know what hit it and I do not know whether it would continue very long.

Proposed section 102H relates to expenditure incurred for political purposes. The onerous part of this is 102H(3)(a)(ii). It refers to a person publicly expressing views on an issue in the election and includes such a person among those who must submit returns. Before and during elections, I have frequently seen people in the community who hold strong views on particular political matters, such as the capital gains tax and the fringe benefits tax. These people sometimes buy advertising space in newspapers to express their views. Those people would have to submit returns according to this legislation. Not only will political parties and candidates have to submit returns, but anybody in the community who publicly expresses a view, at a cost of more than \$200, will have to submit a return. I cannot see anybody in the Northern Territory wearing that. These people have strong views and, if you were to tell them that they had to submit a return because their advertising had passed the \$200 mark, they would probably use a vulgar expression and say 'Up yours!'. If you ask me to withdraw it, I will withdraw it, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Everyone who writes a letter to the editor in support of a political party would have to record the value of the stamp and the paper. A person would have to have his name recorded if he gave more than \$50 to his party and did not want his party to relinquish this money. \$50 these days does not go very far. However, even a donation of \$50 would have to be recorded.

Consider the gross blowout of staff in the Electoral Office if this bill became law, particularly proposed sections 102N, 102P, 102Q and 102R which refer to recording of returns of electoral expenditure, returns by broadcasters, returns by publishers and returns by printers. I can see the Chief Electoral Officer standing up in his office like father rabbit looking at mother rabbit with all his staff increasing along rabbit reproductive lines. He would need dozens of staff in order to cope with the work that would have to be done. This legislation would not only leave him flat out like a lizard drinking, but increasing numbers of staff would be running around like flies with glue on their behinds. You could probably call them Hangan's hundreds. I do not intend any disrespect by that. It is meant as a humorous comment. However, I believe that these people would spend their whole time on unnecessary work.

This proposed legislation is unnecessary, unrealistic and completely out of keeping with the reality of our free enterprise system. I believe it has Buckley's chance of being implemented in the Northern Territory. It would need hundreds of police and myriads of clerks to implement it. I cannot see people in the rural area having anything to do with it. It denies democracy and democratic thinking. It cannot be supported because it typifies big brother at his malignant worst.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the bill presented by the member for Arafura is one of those pieces of legislation which you can agree with philosophically or disagree with philosophically.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I have.

Mr LEO: The member for Koolpinyah went through the various clauses of the bill that she has some difficulty with. When it came down to the bottom line, she was all for the status quo in terms of arranging our electoral matters in the Northern Territory.

I do not think that there would be anybody in this Assembly who would claim that advertising cannot affect the outcome of an election campaign. There are many examples of the Australian electorate responding to very expensive electoral campaigns. Of course, that leads to the next issue: the amount of money spent on election campaigns far outweighs the amount that we could collectively earn over a 4-year period. In other words, more money is spent getting us here than we can ever earn in here. That means that somebody obviously has at least a financial interest in getting some of us into this Assembly.

Certainly, my political party financially supports me. My political party undoubtedly has some donors who are contributing funds to it. I do not think it is unreasonable that those persons should be required to disclose their names. If there is no disclosure, you could end up with the reputation of being the best little government that money can buy - free enterprise government that can be bought and sold. I am sure that none of the members opposite wants to be tainted with that reputation and therefore I urge them to reconsider their philosophical attitude towards this bill. If they believe that some sections would perhaps be too difficult to administer, I would suggest that they indicate that they are prepared to defer discussion on this bill until they draft some amendments. To oppose this legislation on purely philosophical lines undoubtedly will lead to the charges that this government, because of its unilateral action in this Assembly to prevent the disclosure of political donations, is nothing more than the best little government that money can buy. It will be considered a true free enterprise government which is bought and sold in the marketplace.

We will not go into all this nonsense about the labour costs of putting up posters. We are just talking about straight financial donations for major political parties. If that philosophical principle is not supported, we will be left with the simple conclusion that this government's motivation is self-interest and keeping the big bucks rolling, and that it responds to those donations and not to the Northern Territory electorate.

What we have proposed is not unique in any way. In fact, the Commonwealth has similar legislation. Many states have similar legislation even if it is not quite so exhaustive.

Mr Manzie: Which states?

Mr LEO: Certainly not Queensland. Certainly, the Commonwealth has this legislation. It sees no difficulty in having to require persons to disclose donations to political parties. The current federal government did not want to be tainted by the accusation that it was 'the sweetest little government that money can buy' which is obviously a charge that does not worry this government.

I do not want the next government member to get up ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Who do you think you are?

Mr LEO: ... as the member for Koolpinyah did and go through the charade of opposing one proposed section after another. Introduce a raft of amendments if that is what you want to do.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: We do not.

Mr LEO: You get up in this Assembly and tell the Northern Territory that you are the sweetest little government that money can buy and you want to stay that way.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, have you ever heard such a performance in your life? The member for Nhulunbuy has just called his party the sweetest little party that money can buy because, if his analogy is correct, presumably it applies to the political parties in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia as well as the Northern Territory. The only parliaments in Australia to have legislation dealing with disclosure of electoral funding are the federal and New South Wales parliaments and we are told now by the member for Nhulunbuy that you cannot buy a politician in New South Wales. That simple example shows the absolute nonsense of the whole argument from the member for Nhulunbuy.

Except for some very minor amendments, the bill before us is a straight copy of the federal legislation, tailored somewhat to fit the circumstances of the Northern Territory. Fundamentally, it is the same as the federal legislation. It is interesting to analyse why those provisions are there. Those provisions arose as a consequence of decisions, both taken by Labor governments, for governments to fund electoral campaigns. In consequence of the fundamental decision to use the taxpayers' purse to finance political campaigns, it became necessary to provide administrative and control mechanisms and, consequent upon that, came the disclosure of public donations.

Mr Speaker, we heard considerable comment from the member for Nhulunbuy about a philosophical viewpoint. I will say quite clearly that my philosophical viewpoint is against disclosure of electoral funds. I am prepared, more than was the member for Nhulunbuy, to give the reasons for my philosophical viewpoint. The honourable member talked about philosophical differences but did not offer any concrete basis for his philosophical argument.

We all know that political parties of all persuasions receive donations from people. Mostly, politicians do not know which people make the donations, and I noted that the member for Nhulunbuy himself led ...

Mr Leo: Not if they comes through Carpentaria, mate.

Mr HATTON: ... this Assembly to believe that he does not know where the donations for the Australian Labor Party come from ...



Mr Leo: There aren't too many, mate.

Mr HATTON: I can believe that, Mr Speaker. Why would anyone want to donate to the Labor Party in the Northern Territory?

There was no philosophical argument. The only logic that came from what the member for Nhulunbuy said was that, if somebody puts money into a political party, as a consequence, no matter what their dealings with government may be, there will be a presumption that those dealings stem from that donation. That was the basis of the presumption in the member for Nhulunbuy's argument; he assumes guilty behaviour on the part of the government and that somehow disclosure will make some difference.

The honourable member interjected with a reference to Carpentaria Pty Ltd. We have heard some totally unsubstantiated and incredible outbursts in respect of that organisation. I cannot think of a better argument why there should not be disclosure in view of the way a particular company has had its name slandered through the media and in this Assembly as a result of the identification of that organisation by the opposition checking through the Electoral Office to find out who donated money to the Country Liberal Party. Mr Speaker, I refer to statements recorded in Hansard during the previous sittings as to the circumstances that led to the identification of Carpentaria Pty Ltd by the member for Arafura.

Mr Speaker, that is an aside to this basic argument. I make that point because I do not believe that there was any validity in the argument put by the member for Nhulunbuy. Quite frankly, I have been dealing with the statements made by the honourable member because, even after reading the second-reading speech by the member for Arafura several times, I am still looking for a single argument that he has given in support of this. The second-reading speech provided only an explanation of the content of the bill. There was no argument or justification given to explain the purpose of the proposal beyond saying that the bill imposes a requirement for the disclosure of donations to political parties and candidates, and campaign expenditure. That was stated to be the purpose of the bill, but where is the rationale behind the argument? Nothing was provided by the member for Arafura, then the Leader of the Opposition.

I would like to explain why I believe it is inappropriate that there be public disclosure of contributions to political parties. By having public disclosure of donations to political parties, we would deny people the right to support privately the party of their choice, and that would amount, in effect, to a violation of secrecy of the ballot. Secondly, donors could face threats or harassment on account of their campaign gifts. For example, trade union intimidation of companies making donations to particular parties or harassment of contributors to minor parties which promote unpopular causes is quite within the bounds of possibility with a public disclosure of every donation by every organisation or individual. There is risk of that. Disclosure of names of donors to parties might lead to a substantial decline in voluntary contributions to campaign funds. The flow of voluntary contributions to campaign funds is, in itself, a form of expression of community support or otherwise for a particular political cause, not only from individuals or organisations fearing harassment or retaliation, but also from donors simply wishing to remain anonymous.

Disclosure might also inhibit donors who wish to support an individual candidate and not necessarily the political party that candidate represents. All of those contributors may be inhibited by public disclosure of the name

and amount of donation of each individual donor to a political party or a candidate. Disclosure might increase public suspicion on the grounds that it does not reveal the motives of either the donor or the recipient and therefore any action by a government to the advantage of a firm or industry which has made a donation might be suspected - rightly or wrongly - of having been influenced by the campaign contribution. Conversely, if a donation is given to the opposition and not to the government party, that could be seen as the government's motive for not giving a particular business some government work. Disclosure can generate continuing suspicion. That is the sort of suspicion that the opposition has been generating with respect to some companies in the Northern Territory, particularly over the last 3 years, in a most despicable process of character assassination using the sheltered coward's castle of this Assembly for the purpose.

Post-election disclosure will not affect the result of an election because the information is not made available to electors until it is too late for them to act on it. On the other hand, pre-election disclosure is likely to be very burdensome for parties and candidates and enforcement, including verification, is difficult given the time constraints. I note that we are referring here to post-election disclosure. That cannot affect the election; it will not have any direct influence on an election and will serve no purpose for the electoral process. Necessary recording, reporting and auditing requirements for disclosure, either pre- or post-election, would impose a tremendous administrative burden on candidates and parties, especially smaller parties. Also, extensive bureaucratic machinery would be required for that process.

In addition to that placed on candidates and political parties, an administrative burden and a regulatory obligation would be imposed on broadcasters, printers and publishers by this amendment. The introduction of this amendment could also require additional staff to be employed in the Northern Territory Electoral Office. Undoubtedly, it would, because of the bureaucratic red tape that this would generate, and that at a time when this government has given a public commitment to reducing the size of government. This would drive us in a direction totally contrary to that we are set on, and for no good purpose - certainly no good democratic or electoral purpose.

The only thing this bill will do is satisfy the morbid curiosity of the members opposite as to where the CLP funds come from. That is the only reason for this bill. I do not care where the opposition gets its money from. It can obtain funds from every business and individual in the Northern Territory. What matters is how the party acts, and I have problems with that, but that has nothing to do with the donations.

I reiterate that no arguments have been presented so far in this debate beyond a philosophical view that parties should disclose the source of campaign funds. Nothing has been projected to say how it will improve the democratic or electoral processes. There are sound and valid arguments to demonstrate that, in fact, it could have a particularly inhibiting effect on the voluntary donation of moneys to the electoral process, and this is at odds even with the only existing provisions in Australia requiring donations to be disclosed, and they apply to electoral campaigns in New South Wales and the Commonwealth. In those instances, the provisions relate directly to government funding. In fact, these provisions flow on from those specific provisions - not the other way round.

All this process would do is add to the cost of government and the running of political parties. It would create controversy and concern within the

community for no good democratic or electoral purpose. I urge the Assembly to defeat this bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, we have had some fairly poor contributions so far from the government side in this debate. The member for Koolpinyah said that she could go on and on, and she did so. The Chief Minister stated that we could not have this legislation because some of the states do not have it. Such legislation has been a part of life in the United States for many years. The New South Wales and the federal Labor governments have enacted it as a positive move. The people have a right to have this information disclosed so that they know where the funding is coming from.

The Chief Minister said that he had philosophical reasons for his opposition to this bill and that he would tell us those reasons. I found his philosophical reasons pretty thin. It took him about 10 minutes to get to them. It turned out that one of his lofty philosophical reasons was that he might end up with less money. I would not call that a particularly lofty reason for rejecting this. He felt that it might inhibit some companies. What is the problem? Is he talking about public companies? Is there a problem in that some of the shareholders may learn of the way their board of directors is utilising their funds? A couple of years ago, the federal government introduced amendments to the Companies Act to disallow contributions to parties as a legitimate expense in the calculation of profits for taxation purposes. Nevertheless, the only argument the Chief Minister could raise was that it may inhibit some companies.

This side of the Assembly is prepared to be bound by this legislation if this government is willing to pass it. We are proud of our donors and our donors are proud of us and they are prepared to stand up and be counted. I wonder why the Chief Minister has this problem. He believes that revealed donations will attach some sort of an odour to the donor. I find it incredible that the Chief Minister has so little faith in the integrity of his donors that he feels that they would somehow smell if we knew who they were. Where the odour arises is when donations are not revealed but are later brought to light after an attempt has been made to cover them up. That is when the average Territorian starts to wonder what was attached to the donation. Were there any strings? Were there any deals? That is what the average Territorian wonders when he hears the stories that come out later.

If, on the other hand, the people make the donations knowing that they will be publicised, there can be no odour attached to it because the companies or the unions or the individuals have decided that they wish to make a statement. It may not be so commonly known that many companies make equal donations to both political parties in that they believe that there is a necessity for a government and for an opposition and a necessity for the electoral process to be gone through to establish who that government will be. People making such donations should do so on the knowledge that it is on the public record and therefore there can be no scandal attached to their donation later. Many people make those donations not because they believe particularly in a particular party but because they believe in the democratic process. That is not something that will be inhibited by the disclosure of the donations. If the only argument that the Chief Minister can raise - and it seems to be the only one he has - is that it will inhibit some companies from making such donations, it is a fairly grubby reason.

Mr Speaker, he talked about a bureaucratic imposition on parties. I do not know the workings of the CLP, and I have no wish to know, but I would be surprised if it does not have the book work to establish for its own members

the amounts of donations and the expenditure of those donations. Surely it issues receipts which are entered in a cash book and matched up for the purposes of banking. I fail to see where this enormous bureaucratic imposition on parties would be involved. If they have the obligation imposed on them to report back to their membership, it would not be a further imposition to provide the report for the purposes of public disclosure.

The argument that it is too expensive does not hold water. If the government makes that its only basis for an argument, it should have come to us to discuss ways and means of implementing this legislation within its cost constraints. There are matters involved in holding an election which are expensive. It is expensive to go out into rural communities to collect the votes. We have supported the concept of mobile polling booths knowing that it is an additional cost but it has enabled people to vote without the difficulty that was attached to that formerly.

It appears that, every time the opposition proposes amendments to make the electoral process in the Northern Territory more workable, the government opposes them. The member for Arafura proposed amendments before to make the system of mobile booths work better but, because the amendments come from the opposition, the government is not willing to agree to them. That is an extremely negative attitude. We believe in our democratic processes and we want to make them work efficiently and effectively so that the people of the Northern Territory have an electoral system of which they can be proud.

I was extremely disappointed when our last amendment was rejected. I will be extremely disappointed if this one is rejected because we have not been given any reason why it should not be passed. We have given some very good reasons why it should be passed. No odour can attach to a donation which is given in the full knowledge that it will be on the public record. A donation of that type cannot be said to have had hidden strings attached to it. However, we are not proposing this solely for the protection of political parties nor to score political points. The aim basically is to protect those donors because, by public disclosure, they will be protected from the odour that anybody could possibly place on their donation.

The legislation will provide information which the people of the Northern territory have a right to know. Those are the 2 basic reasons why this bill should be passed. I hope that the government has a quick discussion among its members, does not blindly follow its negative attitude that has been displayed so far and decides that it will back a very sensible amendment which will make our legislation in the Northern Territory far more practical and result in the political process in the Northern Territory being held in far higher esteem than it is currently. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, it is going to be so difficult tearing myself away from all this.

Mr Dale: Senator Ted will cooperate if you do not want to.

Mr Hatton: He will feel more comfortable in the Senate anyway.

Mr D.W. Collins: With all those other oldies.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: As I expected, my bill has been rejected.

Mr Hatton: Again.

Mr B. COLLINS: Again. Another bill that I introduced in an effort to provide some degree of equality in respect of bush voters and the mobile polling booth system was also rejected on 3 occasions. I see no reason to needlessly detain the Assembly at this late hour again by dealing in detail with some of the comments made, but I will refer briefly to them.

The member for Koolpinyah delivered 15 minutes of absolute gibberish. It would be difficult to address myself to nonsense about having to declare the cost of postage stamps on letters to the editor. It is hardly surprising that the contribution was so deficient in logical reason. She cannot expect to pull a Hansard out of the Assembly's stock 5 minutes before the start of the debate, refer to my second-reading speech, and then fly by the seat of her pants for the rest of the debate. She admitted it herself. The Hansard record will show that she was actually delving through the clauses contained in the bill as she was on her feet.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Her knickers, please.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: I must confess that I deliberately used that expression because I knew it would provoke the response it did.

The member for Koolpinyah said something that astounded me in terms of her grasp of the legislation. She said that, because this legislation has been introduced into the Assembly by the opposition, it must be directed against the CLP. I have contributed to debate in this Assembly on hundreds of bills, but I have to say that it has never crossed my mind that, because they were introduced into the Assembly by the government, their purpose was to discriminate against the ALP. It was a fairly astounding suggestion. The legislation has not been introduced to discriminate against an individual political party. Like every piece of legislation that is introduced into this Assembly, it applies equally to all Territorians.

The Chief Minister was also helpful in contributing another sparkling gem to this debate. At least honourable members are consistent in providing an endless source of support for the opposition's legislation and motions in this Assembly when they attempt to provide reasons why they should be defeated. I quote the Chief Minister who said that disclosure of a campaign contribution would be a breach of the secrecy of the ballot. If evidence was required as to why this legislation should be supported, that is it. I have to tell the Chief Minister, in response to that absurd statement, that we are trying to get a system that involves voting with ballot papers rather than dollar bills. Disclosure of a campaign contribution cannot be seen as a breach of a secrecy of the ballot process. However, that does indicate the thinking of members opposite. They equate support for a political party in the ballot box at an election with how much you contribute to the party.

He went on to say, and it was the silliest thing he said, that the Northern Territory government has to oppose this legislation because it has given a commitment to reduce the role of government, in a financial sense, in the Northern Territory. As we all know, the Northern Territory government without doubt would be the greatest socialist government in this country. I do not know of any government in Australia which has used the parliament to introduce legislation to compulsorily acquire \$50m-worth of private property from an unwilling owner, not for a public purpose, but to transfer that

property to another company. I do not know of any government in Australia that has done that, apart from this one. I do not really see how the government can support its extraordinary claim that it wants to reduce the role of government in the economy of the Northern Territory.

Not only did it compulsorily acquire this property, but it managed to lose \$14m in the process. The list goes on and on. We are only finding out, with every passing day, how much the needless interference of this government in the private sector is costing Territorians. How can members opposite say that they are opposing this legislation because it would cost the taxpayers money when it now appears - in yet another episode - that it has probably lost in the vicinity of \$500 000 in a completely unnecessary way at Oolloo Station? I have not seen any evidence given by the government to justify the little exercise at Annaburroo. Yet the government has the hide to talk about our not giving cogent reasons why this legislation should be supported. No one has yet explained why it was necessary to move into the marketplace and lift Annaburroo from its owners when no one in the private sector would buy it. Obviously, that will end up costing us \$500 000 at the end of the day. The attitude of members opposite to all these things is: 'What is half a million? What is a million? Penny-pinching, nitpicking complaints'. I would say without fear of contradiction that the small additional cost of policing this particular legislation, as with the federal legislation, would be as nothing to the money that has been thrown away with both hands by this government with absolutely no return to the people of the Northern Territory.

The Chief Minister went on at some length about the purpose of this legislation not being outlined in my second-reading speech. That is nonsense as well because it is contained in the first paragraph. He was right about one thing: you either agree philosophically and can see the reasons for supporting public disclosure of donations to political parties or you cannot. It is as clear as that. I agree with him on that. You either think it is a good idea or you think that it is a bad idea.

I know at first hand that the introduction of similar legislation federally has had an extremely valuable and positive effect on potential donors to political parties. The experience in the United States has demonstrated it also. The proposed legislation is in line with the government's philosophy of introducing pecuniary interests legislation into this Assembly to force disclosure of the private interests of members of parliament. It is interesting that the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory leads a government that introduced that legislation, with the support of the opposition, to bring the money side of politics into the open. The reason pecuniary interests legislation was introduced into the parliament was to place a public onus on members, particularly Cabinet members who are making decisions involving the disbursement of millions of dollars of public money. The pecuniary interests legislation was introduced by this government to ensure, without any shadow of doubt, that there would be no conflicts of interest in decisions made by the government. That was the reason for it and no one here doubts that. The government introduced that legislation in the Assembly. How then can the government have a philosophical objection to continuing that process to its logical conclusion by involving the major political parties in disclosure? It escapes me altogether. Perhaps the government is about to recant on its support for the pecuniary interests legislation.

There have been some absurd comments made here in respect of that legislation. Some government members have claimed that it was unnecessary because it has never been utilised in terms of people seeking information on

the pecuniary interests of members. The legislation, of course, achieves its purpose simply by being there, like Peter Sellers. It achieves its purpose by placing a legal obligation on members to disclose their pecuniary interests. It would largely achieve its purpose if there was never an inquiry from a member of the public about what those pecuniary interests were. We all know that we have an obligation to declare our interests, and we do so.

It is a matter of legitimate public concern in a democratic society to know who the donors to political campaigns are. This is to ensure that people and organisations who are prepared to give very large amounts to political parties are seen to be doing that so that, if there is a question at some time that the donors of these gifts are receiving inordinate benefits from the government, the matter can come to light. It applies to all parties: the CLP, the National Party and the ALP. Donors will be aware that the onus will be placed on them. We do not need a scandal over election funding to provide a reason why this legislation should be introduced.

We know about the public controversy that still surrounds the operations of the Bjelke-Petersen Foundation. Its contributions to the National Party in Queensland have been the subject of much controversy. Of course, because there is no legislation, the source of contributions remains secret. We have the equivalent of that organisation in the Northern Territory in the form of Carpentaria Pty Ltd. I do not think it is reasonable that front companies ...

Mr Perron: Has the ALP got one?

Mr B. COLLINS: No. The ALP does not have a front company to disguise the identity of donors, but I would point out the logical absurdity of what the member for Fannie Bay is suggesting. If the ALP had anything to hide, we would not be introducing this legislation into the Assembly expecting it to be supported by the government. However, whilst we do not sympathise with them, we can certainly understand its reasons for opposing it.

Mr Speaker, in the relative calm of this evening, it has occurred to me why this week has been relatively tolerable. I have suddenly realised that we have lost the services of the world's noisiest Treasurer - the travelling salesman for mining in national parks. Perhaps the government could be kind to us and ensure that he is provided with a 1-way ticket to somewhere every time the Legislative Assembly sits. It has made an extraordinary difference to the tone of debate this week.

Mr Speaker, again honourable members opposite have not distinguished themselves in this debate. They never do when opposition bills are introduced into this Assembly. It is obvious that none of them has bothered to consider the provisions seriously. As I said, the member for Koolpinyah conducted the most detailed examination of the legislation. It does them no credit because I recall many occasions when the government has introduced legislation into this Assembly, which has been opposed philosophically to the position that the Labor Party has adopted, but there has been no occasion that I know of when we did not make a real attempt to address ourselves to that legislation and, at least, seek to amend it constructively. I think the Education Act was one of the most notable examples where over 60 opposition amendments were accepted by the government. That demonstrated that the approach adopted by the opposition led to better legislation for the people of the Northern Territory.

Without exception, there has not been a single general business day on which legislation has been introduced by the opposition that the government has ever addressed itself seriously to the content of that legislation.

Government members have simply made up their minds, and this has been exemplified by the member for Koolpinyah's give-away phrase that, irrespective of its merit or value, the legislation must be defeated because it was introduced into the Assembly by the opposition. Members opposite can always be relied on to give themselves away. As the member for Koolpinyah said, the legislation must be directed against the CLP because it was introduced by the ALP. That does her no credit and it does the government no credit. As the members for Stuart and Nhulunbuy said, at the very least, if the government had objections to the detail of the legislation, it could have made some attempt to amend it for the benefit of the people of the Territory.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members. I ask the Assembly to support this legislation which will result in a fairer, more democratic and more open method of conducting Northern Territory elections.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Noes 17

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

Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr Dale  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Hanrahan  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Setter  
Mr Steele  
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Araluen Arts and Cultural Trust Act Repeal Bill (Serial 246) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

#### ARALUEN ARTS AND CULTURAL TRUST ACT REPEAL BILL (Serial 246)

Continued from 19 November 1986.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the purpose of the bill is to transfer control of the management of the Araluen Arts and Cultural Centre from the Araluen Arts and Cultural Trust to the Alice Springs Town Council. The council will control and manage the centre through the establishment of a management committee drawn from groups now represented on the trust. The



trust was an instrumentality set up at the time of construction of the arts centre. Probably its role is no longer required. I would ask if, in his reply, the minister could inform the Assembly whether or not a management agreement with the Alice Springs Town Council will follow the repeal of this act and whether or not that management agreement is largely the same as the agreement that I assume existed with the trust. I would also ask whether such an agreement will provide some method by which the committee will be organised so that the different interest groups involved with the arts centre can be represented fairly.

Mr Speaker, I indicate the opposition's support for the legislation.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I want to make a couple of points in relation to this bill. I will be brief because of the lateness of the hour. I want to reiterate the point made by the member for Nhulunbuy, shadow minister for community development. I do not believe the honourable minister picked up the point the honourable member raised in his second-reading speech. I hope the minister will do so at this stage because, with the change of arrangements stemming from the demise of the Araluen Arts and Cultural Trust and the resumption of management of Araluen Arts Centre by the council, quite obviously there is some concern amongst members of the trust that the council should continue to pursue the same sort of management objectives that the trust did. Clearly, the people involved with the trust have some concern about the trust being sunk in this. At the very least, they want a council management arrangement that will continue to pursue the sort of objectives the trust had for the centre. I would appreciate it if the honourable minister would respond on that point in the third-reading, particularly since he did not do so in reply at the end of the second-reading debate.

I would make one general point in relation to this bill. Having had experience as a member of the Friends of Araluen and having very much appreciated some of the activities that Araluen has encouraged, I have some concern that changes in the management arrangements may lead to some deterioration in the quality of the offerings provided for people in central Australia.

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I am having some difficulty finding it in my standing orders, but I understood that, during the third reading members, must not refer to matters raised in the second reading.

Mr SPEAKER: I will uphold the point of order. The honourable member for Fannie Bay is quite correct. The honourable member cannot raise matters which were debated in the second reading.

Mr BELL: That curtails the points I was going to raise in the third reading. I think my first point was a legitimate point to be raised in a third-reading speech and that was that the minister quite clearly did not answer the concerns of the member for Nhulunbuy. I believe that is something I can legitimately place on the record during the third-reading debate.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Speaker, it is indeed fitting that this landmark is in the middle of my electorate. I have spent a number of enjoyable evenings attending shows and presentations in the theatre. My youngest son,

Cameron, has performed in plays on numerous occasions. Indeed, I have heard it remarked that his acting capabilities are such that he would make a good politician.

Mr Speaker, as you would be aware, the Araluen trust has faced many financial difficulties, almost from the day it opened. Despite the excellent start that ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! You ruled that the member for MacDonnell was obliged to restrict his comments to matters which would not normally be raised in the second-reading speech. I believe that the member for Araluen is doing exactly the same thing.

Mr SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order and advise the member for Araluen that he is not able to canvass those areas which were raised or could have been raised in the second-reading debate. He can refer only to those matters which may have arisen during the committee stages of the bill.

Mr POOLE: Mr Speaker, the burden that the trust has been carrying for many years has indeed been heavy. I congratulate its members on their performance to date. We cannot allow the cost of the operation to become a financial millstone around the necks of central Australians.

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for Araluen is quite clearly disregarding your ruling on the matter.

Mr SPEAKER: Yes. I uphold the point of order raised again by the member for Nhulunbuy. For the information of all honourable members, whilst there is no standing order covering it, I am advised by the Clerk that it is common practice. I will quote from Pettifer: 'The motion for the third reading may be debated but the scope of the debate is more restricted than at the second-reading stage, being limited to the contents of the bill; that is, the matter contained in the clauses and schedules of the bill. In order to avoid opening up or repeating debate on matters discussed on the motion at a second reading or during the committee stage, the debate on the motion for the third reading is limited to the bill as reported from the committee'.

Mr POOLE: I will wind up, Mr Speaker, by congratulating members of the Araluen trust for the good work that they have done over the last 6 years. I am sure the new arrangements that have been put into effect will work extremely well for the cultural trust.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, being aware of the restrictions under which we operate in third-reading speeches, I simply wish to place on the record my hope that the council will operate as the old trust did.

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member is not referring to specific clauses in the legislation and is indeed commencing a speech which is quite contrary to your ruling.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, there is a specific clause in the bill which provides for the council to be able to operate outside the local government area without the permission of the minister, which is the normal provision under the Local Government Act.

Mr SPEAKER: I again uphold the point of order. Matters being raised by the honourable member could quite easily have been raised in the second reading.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, if the opposition members will forbear from raising points of order, I may well be able to answer their question. The reason I may have appeared a little slow ...

Mr SPEAKER: The minister is skating on thin ice. To circumvent any necessity for further points of order, the minister may seek leave to respond to the points raised.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to respond to questions raised by members of the opposition.

Leave granted.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I was quite stunned earlier because I had thought that the opposition hung on every word contained in government second-reading speeches. Obviously that is not the case. To answer the question, I will quote from my second-reading speech:

The council and the trust have now settled on an agreement. This agreement entails in part that the council will control and manage the centre by the establishment of a management committee pursuant to the Local Government Act. The membership of the management committee will be drawn from those groups now represented on the trust. The interests of the people of the region will thus be represented in 2 ways: first, by the method of appointment of the management committee and, secondly, by the normally democratic representation reflected on the Alice Springs Town Council itself.

I do hope that, in future, the opposition pays a little bit more attention to the legislation that is before this Assembly. They will not then have to ask such stupid questions.

Bill read a third time.

#### MOTION

#### Discharge of Items from Notice Paper

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that government business, orders of the day Nos 22, 23, 24, 27, 29, 30 and 31 be discharged from the notice paper.

Motion agreed to.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr STEELE (Elsey): Mr Speaker, I will not take up too much of the Assembly's time tonight. During the last sittings of the Assembly, on 20 August, I spoke about the Draft Katherine Rural Area Plan 1986. This suggested plan was brought to the attention of Katherine people at the Katherine Show in July of this year. Written comments were to be received by 18 September but the minister agreed to my suggestion to allow another 2 months for submissions and the new date became the 18 November 1986.

Some 17 submissions were made to the government and 127 people signed a letter expressing concern about the proposal. Most of the representations came from the rural people. The concept of the plan as presented was to provide a form of land use control outside the boundaries of the Katherine Town Council area because of the pressure for large scale rural subdivisions and to protect water catchment areas. In this proposal, the minister was to be the sole consent authority.

The objectives of the the plan were for the protection or best use of agricultural land, Katherine's water supply and recreation areas with provision for hobby farms, rural residential and special uses. Although agreeing with some controls, most of the people I have spoken to disagree with direct bureaucratic management of the rural area. They disagree that land use can be defined by drawing lines on a map. Some defined use areas or land for special uses are to be found in the agricultural lands area or vice versa. In other words, subdivisions should be allowed on farms over land that is unsuitable for farming, subject to access and other constraints. The retention of agricultural land as the policy of the government should apply only to productive land units. Let us not lock land away that could be better used for other purposes.

In the zoning of Katherine rural land, this factor should be recognised and I ask the minister to take cognisance of these remarks. I suggest to the minister that, in preparing to develop the proposal further, he sponsor an advisory group to assist him finalise plans for the area. My constituents basically understand the need for land use management. However, they are most anxious to have input into the final shape of the rural plan. They may even wish to have a rural planning authority consistent with government practice in other places.

In talking about the land around Katherine, we have seen the establishment of the mango plantation at Manbulloo, the potato and onion farm at Ballongilly Farms and the steady progress made by farmers such as Wally Christie, Bert Nixon, Flip Phillips, Kevin Hickey and Ron Hursey, just to name a few. Their efforts have underscored the importance of the protection of farmlands in and around Katherine. They also realise the land should not be locked away forever by drawing straight lines on a map. They understand that competing land uses must be catered for in a developing area. The agricultural land around Katherine is basically still in the project stage. Some farmers have incurred huge losses because of seasonal factors and those farmers would agree that the vegetable growing areas outside of Sydney and the land protection practices applied in that region could not be compared with and are in no way appropriate for the Katherine area.

In conclusion, if the government decides to opt for a rural planning authority, what should its jurisdiction be? It should extend possibly north to the Edith River, east to the Katherine Gorge, south to include the Mataranka pastoral lease and west to include the Manbulloo lease and the Florina area. When the minister and his department have examined the proposals and taken note of the concern expressed, I would be grateful if the new proposal could be placed before the people so vitally concerned. I commend the government for undertaking a consultative process thus far.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the question of the development of Palmerston is something that has been of interest to me since I became a member of this Assembly. Some members will recall my comments on the Palmerston Development Authority Bill when it was presented to this Assembly in 1981. At the last sittings, we saw the dissolution of the Palmerston

Development Authority and the gradual emergence of a form of local government in Palmerston. During my time as shadow minister for lands, I have taken considerable interest in the development of Palmerston. Whenever I have had the opportunity, I have taken a drive around the suburbs of Palmerston and it has been of great interest to see that particular community developing. It was particularly refreshing to drive around on Saturday with Mr Tony Henry, the Labor candidate for Palmerston in the next election, to see the electorate through his eyes. The area is certainly greener now.

I had the opportunity to talk to a number of people there and, for that reason, I wanted to take some time in this evening's adjournment debate. There has been considerable concern about the quality of the bus service at Palmerston. I want to convey my congratulations to Mr Henry for his energetic efforts in seeking to obtain more adequate public transport for the people at Palmerston. He puts himself rather in contrast to the sitting member who seems to be more interested in using public transport between here and Paris than seeking better public transport for his constituents within his electorate. I am quite sure the member for Berrimah will send a little note of thanks along to Mr Henry for the efforts he has put in, as will the voters of Palmerston when they get the opportunity.

The particular issue I wanted to raise in this evening's adjournment debate relates to various matters of concern with that particular service. There is a high degree of isolation that is potentially responsible for considerable social dislocation in an area like Palmerston. There can be little doubt that the Minister for Transport and Works and the government bear a great responsibility, having created this satellite city, to ensure that people who live there have adequate transport. There are families and young people who are not able to enjoy available recreation facilities. We had discussion this evening about an arts centre in Alice Springs. I would remind the Chief Minister that there is also an arts centre in Darwin and one would like to think that the people of Palmerston would be able to enjoy that as well. However, it is not possible for many people to come in to enjoy those services. There are no late buses and therefore many people cannot avail themselves of entertainment that is available to their fellow Top Enders who live in Darwin.

Equally, there is no service between Palmerston and Darwin between midday on Saturday and 7.45 am on Monday. Those people are severely isolated. The point I am making is that there is no Sunday service at all. That is a matter of considerable concern to the people who are living in that area. I believe that, if the Northern Territory government had planned adequately for a satellite town like Palmerston, it would have given better consideration to an adequate public transport system.

As I have said, difficulties arise for a number of people. If people need or wish to come to Darwin, they are forced to come in by motor car. That encourages people to drive along that road. They might come in for a convivial evening and we are all aware of the problems that can occur when adequate public transport is not available. It is a sad fact that people who are required to commence work before 8 o'clock in the morning cannot use public transport to reach their place of employment if they work at Casuarina. A considerable section of the work force needs to be able to get to work a little earlier than that. I adjure the Minister for Transport and Works and the Northern Territory government to give more consideration to bus schedules for Palmerston.

In closing, I would once more like to congratulate Mr Henry on making representations for the residents of Palmerston, and I am quite sure that they appreciate his efforts.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I come to praise the Speaker, not to bury him. I would like to say a few words about a subject that is pretty close to our Speaker's heart: the Ghan Preservation Society. It is fitting that we acknowledge the work of the society and, indeed, our Speaker's personal contribution. The community effort with the regard to the restoration of the Ghan, its associated equipment and the MacDonnell siding is unsurpassed anywhere in the Territory and probably in Australia. Members, their wives and, in many cases, their children have offered support in many ways to achieve the objectives of this society. I am amazed at the amount of support offered by private companies, departments, Australian National Railways and individuals. It enjoys broad community support and the endeavours of all concerned will come to fruition in 1988.

I would like to take a few moments to acknowledge the contributions that have been made by the society. The society has planted some 500 trees at the siding, complete with irrigation systems, and surely this will put it in the running for one of the Greening Australia awards. The society has purchased 2 diesel locomotives and has added a C17 steam locomotive which arrived from Caloundra just before last Christmas. Australian National Railways, Brambles Industrial Services, Bob Putland Cartage Contractors, MacMahon Construction and many local Alice Springs business firms all helped to defray the freight costs on this locomotive. Mr Hughie Withersdorf was the man who started all this and Don Williams, Murray Lubcke and Malcolm Willis of ANR, and Bob Bannon of Queensland Railways all offered advice and their technical expertise.

At the MacDonnell siding, an old dining car, 2 economy sleeping vans and 2 employee vans can now be seen. ANR shipped them back to the Alice on the new Ghan. Dalgety Bennett Farmers and Elders Pastoral helped with donations of materials to provide the fence and secure the siding. At the siding, a bower shed has been constructed and I am told that 350 m<sup>3</sup> of cracker dust and a similar quantity of riverbed pebbles were used to landscape the area. Bob Putland did the honours by carting these materials from the Finke River, approximately 120 km south of Alice Springs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, nobody dares to leave anything lying around in Alice Springs that looks even remotely as though it would be a handy acquisition for the Ghan Society. If one does, that is exactly where it will go. I do not know of a demolished building or house that has not been picked over by members of the society. Harvey Millard's 2 east side houses were virtually demolished when he suggested that the society make full use of the opportunity to obtain building materials. Even the federal Department of Administrative Services allowed the society to strip the old Water Resources depot sheds. MacMahon Construction played its part by levelling and filling the storage area at the MacDonnell siding.

Regular support for the society has been offered by one of the local solicitors, Chris Turner, and it is pleasing to note that even the Pooles are contributing: Chas Poole of Alice Springs and Jigs Poole from Port Augusta. Unfortunately, they are not relations of mine but apparently they are old railway families and they have all contributed. People like Clarissa Rose and many of the members' wives have catered for hungry and thirsty workers. I am told that Bob Johnson and his mates did a fine job of clearing the old line up to the MacDonnell siding. Peter Balwyn and Coord Transport have moved Top End items to Alice Springs at no cost to the society. Bruce Perkins and Humes have donated items which Coord moved down.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that in the past the society has moved mountains. It has moved over 4000 m<sup>3</sup> in fact, but, with over 300 members now, many from interstate - I am told that the society even has a knight as an international member, Sir Peter Gatsen - I guess the society has the ability to move more than mountains. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Arunga Park Speedway, which loaned its grader and water truck, and Greg Florence and Les Freeman who drove them. Glen Bartlett and his wife should be thanked for their assistance in lifting more than 300 railway sleepers from the camel farm fence and Brambles Industrial Services for continued assistance with many crane lifts around town, including unloading of the old Ghan rolling stock. Much of this crane work occurred after working hours and the society is very grateful for the support and assistance it has received from Brambles.

BP Australia donated the first fill of diesel fuel for the NSU locomotive. Joey Cavanagh spent many hours of smiling service moving much of the loam for top dressing. Centralian Industries loaned a truck and John Landers to assist with the mountain moving; they too deserve our thanks. CKS, Chuck Dowson, assisted in many areas, particularly with the wiring jobs that abounded. Coates Hire Service assisted with many loans of much valuable equipment utilised for many tasks at the siding. Trevor Bittner and Mike Monroe have made a huge task much simpler for the society. Graham Gatenby, who operated the Coates equipment, deserves praise, and Hirex Services, for the short-term loan, which eventually became a long-term loan, of a portable dunny. Kurtz Kromholz gave assistance with mountain moving, as did Col and Liz Davies, ColCon, with the loans of a grader and front-end loader.

We should also thank Len Kittle who loaned his hippy tip truck constantly and Des McRae who has moved mountains of riverbed sand for the loam mix. Des' grandfather, together with his father and mother, worked on the construction of the original Oodnadatta to Alice Springs line in 1927 to 1929. Northern Territory Fuels gave generous donations of oil for the NSU locomotive: thank you, Tony Richards. Greg Rhodes and Graham Bernie have continually loaned the society a big front-end loader. Col Stanton and Bob Keetch, from the Arid Zone Research Station, helped plough and prepare the field for sowing. The Joint Defence Space Research Facility donated a number of valuable pieces of equipment needed by the society. Murray Lubcke and the staff of Australian National Railways have helped on many occasions in many ways. Malcolm Noble, Malcolm Dixon and Malcolm Willis have assisted with advice from ANR's Port Augusta office. Gary Taylor also assisted with help, advice and service above and beyond the call of duty. Last, but not least, we should thank the Correctional Services staff and their guests at Her Majesty's Alice Springs hotel.

Mr Speaker, what your society has achieved in 12 months is surely remarkable. The amount of effort and assistance can be measured: at least 20 000 man and woman hours have been expended to date. That in itself is a remarkable thing. Mr Speaker, the society and you, as its president, deserve our congratulations, and I look forward to seeing the fruition of your labours in 1988.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise first to express my concern and horror at the decision, apparently taken by the Minister for Transport and Works, to allow cigarette advertising on buses. I find that a difficult, if not incomprehensible, decision that has been taken by the Northern Territory ...

Mr Perron: What! Are you one of these purists?

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Have you checked to see when the decision was made?

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I do not know when the decision was made, but the matter has been brought to my attention in the last few weeks by a number of people who are concerned by that advertising on buses. What gives it special relevance, even if the advertisements have been there for some time, is that school children will travel on the Darwin Bus Service next year. That ought to be a matter of some concern to the citizens of Darwin. Certainly, it is a matter of concern to them, and I would have thought that it would be of concern to members opposite. This government has spent a considerable sum of money in the last few years promoting 'Quit Smoking' campaigns. The Minister for Health has spent considerable sums. The Attorney-General sponsored one and gave a public commitment at the time that he would give up smoking.

Mr Dondas: He has given up smoking.

Mr SMITH: Good for him.

At the same time that these perfectly sound and sensible steps have been taken by the Department of Health, they are being undermined by the Darwin Bus Service and the Minister for Transport and Works who has made the decision. There is no doubt that there is a connection between smoking and lung cancer - that has been proved beyond any possibility of scientific doubt. I find it incomprehensible that the Department of Health has taken a decision that it will promote healthy lifestyles and encourage people to quit smoking and that another government department will go directly against that and encourage people to smoke by putting advertisements on buses. It is doubly incomprehensible when we realise that this government has taken a decision that, next year, Darwin school kids will travel to school on the normal bus service. We will have this incomprehensible situation where our kids will travel to school in buses that have advertisements promoting smoking. I urge the government to reconsider its decision.

Mr Manzie: It is done all over the country.

Mr SMITH: The Attorney-General says that it is done all over the country. So what? This government prides itself on being better than the rest of Australia. We hear it all the time. Here is a perfect opportunity for the government to reverse a decision that is internally inconsistent within government departments and to show to the people of Northern Territory that it has a genuine commitment to the health of people in the Territory. It can do that very easily and very simply by removing those smoking advertisements on buses. I have been pleasantly surprised by the number of people who have commented to me about this matter. There is concern in the community and, to some extent, that is a result of the programs that the government itself has run to promote healthy lifestyles and to discourage people from smoking.

Mr Speaker, the second thing that I want to talk about tonight is the general question of tenders. I welcome the government's announcement on tendering and I believe it will go some way towards resolving the problems in relation to tendering. I welcome the formation of a single Tender Board and I particularly welcome the appointment of the Industrial Supplies Office representative to it. I think that is a positive step which will result in private sector input into the tendering process. I hope, however, that it will not involve that officer for more than a half day or 1 day per week. It is certainly not the most important part of his job and he will have a full enough job without becoming too involved in that.



I welcome a decision also for pre-qualifications for tenders between \$250 000 to \$4m and for pre-selection processes to be put in place for tenders over \$4m. I welcome what the Chief Minister calls the proactive nature of the Tender Board. In other words, it will be involved more directly and earlier in the development of satisfactory tendering and purchasing processes. All of those steps are positive. However, there are still a number of problems that have not been resolved and I want to go through 3 or 4 of those tonight.

First, there is the question of the selection of successful tenderers and the lowest price concept. It is unfortunate that, when you have tough economic times, as we have at present, everybody who puts in bids is shaving his margins in order to obtain the job. That is not wrong in itself but it places a special requirement on the government departments who are processing the tenders to be particularly careful that the tenderer to whom they award the contract has put in a realistic price and has the assets to ensure that he can carry out the job.

We have had too many examples of successful tenderers in the Northern Territory who have not been sufficiently checked out by the government and who have gone broke and left mountains of debts behind them. The bad debt situation in Darwin is so bad that a number of firms are sticking an extra 10% on top of the price just to cover their bad debts. An extra 10% on the price of a product in Darwin is a price that you and I as taxpayers pay. Some bad debt component, I accept, is proven and desirable but 10% is an extraordinarily high amount. One reason why it is so high is that the government does not sufficiently check out the bona fides of the tenderers to whom it gives jobs.

Mr Dondas: Where did you get the 10% from?

Mr SMITH: The 10% comes from people who work in industry around this town.

Mr Speaker, I have one poor unfortunate constituent who has been caught 3 times by tenderers going broke. He was taken by Dorcon for \$5000. He was taken by Henry Brothers for \$8000 and he is currently in the process of being taken by another contractor, whose name I will not reveal at this stage, for \$28 000. All of those firms went bad when handling government contracts.

Mr Perron: If you cannot handle the heat, you go down in the tube.

Mr SMITH: I accept the principle that, if you cannot handle heat, you go down the tube, but a person who elects to work with a company that has a government tender should be able to do so on the basis that the government has checked that the company has the ability to do the job and pay its debts. If the government is not doing that, it is not doing its job. Surely a subcontractor should have the confidence, if he is to work for somebody as a subcontractor on a government job, that that person has been checked out by the government.

Mr Dondas: He was caught twice before.

Mr SMITH: That is right. In other words, the government failed on 2 previous occasions to do the job that it should have done.

Mr Perron: So the imbecile does not have to use his own brains.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, another matter that I want to raise relates to strange practices that presently occur. One came to my attention the other night and I am sure honourable members opposite will agree with me on this. There is a local fellow who has set himself up as a wholesaler of manhole covers. These manhole covers come from overseas - I think from Taiwan. It would be possible for him to land them in Darwin by sea at a rate that is \$30 per manhole cover less than what he is currently paying to bring them overland from Sydney. The only thing stopping him from doing that is that there is a requirement within the relevant department, probably Transport and Works, that all manhole covers in the Northern Territory be stamped with the approval of the New South Wales water and sewerage board or whatever its correct name is. They are exactly the same manhole covers. They come from exactly the same place in Japan or Taiwan but, unless they have the magic seal of approval of the New South Wales authority, he cannot use them in the Northern Territory. That, in my view, is a ridiculous situation.

Mr Perron: I agree.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, I thought you would. We are paying \$30 extra per manhole cover simply because we have a bureaucratic mechanism that does not allow the manhole covers to be imported directly into Darwin by sea and to be wholesaled by that person. I hope the government will have a particular look at that matter.

A related matter is that manhole ladders which were previously quite successfully made out of galvanised iron must now be made from stainless steel because this has been insisted upon, without notice, by the relevant government departments. The galvanised ladders cost about \$200 and the stainless steel ones about \$1200. That standard was imposed on the industry without notice, without consultation and is obviously quite unnecessary. Galvanised iron ladders under manhole covers are going to last a pretty long time. It may be slightly less than stainless steel ladders, but certainly not enough to justify paying 6 times the price. This is an example of a government bureaucracy not being responsive to the needs and requirements of local industry and setting up standards that are far higher than what is needed in that particular area.

We have all made comments from time to time on different aspects of this general problem. These 2 examples highlight problems in that particular area and I hope that, when the Tender Board is up and running, it will assess those sorts of things to ensure that all unnecessary bureaucratic interference in the tender process is removed and goods are priced as economically as possible. That will be one of the major tasks for the Tender Board as it becomes functional between now and March next year.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I am sorry that the member for Millner does not live in the rural area or have a rural electorate. If we had manholes, manhole ladders and manhole covers in the rural area, I would be very happy to work with him because I certainly agree with him. I did not know much about manhole covers before, and I did not know much about his manhole ladders, but I agree with the sentiments he expressed.

I also agree with him - and I admit this is pretty unusual - about smoking advertisements on buses. Being a non-smoker, I regard smoking as a repulsive habit. My definition of smoking is the personal emanation of socially unacceptable substances that have to be endured by those who care more for their health than to smoke themselves. I think that it would be a Solomon-like decision if the minister, having regard to contracts involving

the smoking advertisements, ensured that advertisements be placed on the buses to discourage children from smoking. The wording could be similar to the TV slogan which says 'Only Dags Smoke Fags', or something like that. Both sides of the story should be presented.

Tonight, I want to comment on an increasingly dangerous situation, and this is not confined to the rural area. I am referring to children who ride their bikes on the incorrect side of the road. If my attention had been diverted for a fraction of a second, I could very easily have killed a child on a bike who was on the incorrect side of the road. I was driving home in the late afternoon and I missed this child by only a couple of feet or so. It was a girl aged 12 or 13. I was very upset at the time. I do not harbour any grudges and, if I am upset about something, I usually let people know about it there and then. The only reason I did not say anything was that I would have had to lean out of the window and perhaps I would not have been heard. I was certainly rather shaken because I came very close to killing that child. I would have had that on my conscience all my life, thinking that perhaps the accident would not have happened if my attention had not been diverted for a couple of seconds. I would have had the death of that child on my conscience although I believe I was driving with due care.

I do not know where this habit has come from although I have seen it in the rural area several times. On another occasion, I nearly cleaned up a younger child. I was driving very slowly in the old farm ute and the child came straight out of a driveway across the front of me and then rode down the side of the ute again on the incorrect side of the road. As I said, I do not know where the habit has come from. Perhaps parents and teachers, remembering the old days when they were taught to walk on the road facing oncoming traffic, have taught their children to act accordingly when they are riding on the road. I spoke to a teacher in the rural area who said that these children have grown up with the view that it is quite okay to ride on the incorrect side of the road because the teacher said so. This teacher explained how another teacher had stood in front of a class and told the children: 'You ride on this side of the road'. What she did not explain was that that side was her left and the children's right. As a result, the children thought it was okay to ride on the right hand side of the road. I have spoken to teachers at schools in the rural area and conveyed my views about this dangerous practice. It is a very undesirable and dangerous practice which has to stop.

Another practice has been observed in the rural area and I have no doubt it happens in other places. Perhaps other members also have knowledge of it happening in their electorates. I refer to young people who get their driving licence at the age of 16, and then drive in a very unsafe and dangerous way on the roads. This has been noticed in my electorate. Teachers have been told and parents have been told. I have written against the practice and the high school constable has been told about it. I was very much in favour of the legislation which allowed young people to drive at the age of 16, but there is some feeling in the rural area, and possibly in other places, that this is not appropriate. These people appear to be driving in a completely dangerous way. They are probably sowing their wild oats. They seem to believe they can hoon around on the roads and nobody will get hurt. What they fail to take into account is that many of the roads are not bitumen roads but formed gravel roads, many of them in a state of disrepair. It is okay to drive over them with care, but not to go lairising around.

Even if these young people do not hurt other people, they could seriously injure or perhaps even kill themselves. In doing so, they will bring distress

to their families. Unfortunately, many parents, when confronted by the fact their children are engaging in these dangerous road practices, either wipe their hands of it, saying that they can look after themselves now that they have their licences, or put their heads in the sand and deny that their children could be doing it. In both cases, they are neglecting their parental responsibilities. I do not believe that parental responsibilities end when the child reaches the age of 15 or 16, but continue as long as the parent is alive and as long as the child is alive. The child should always look to the parent for guidance and care. I know that, when children get older and parents get older, the situation is usually reversed, but I think that a parent who neglects the care of a child of any age is not fulfilling his or her parental responsibilities.

The last subject on which I would like to speak relates to the Minister for Conservation's answer to my question regarding the program to permit people to keep reptiles. I know for a fact that the Conservation Commission was notified in 1984 that it would be desirable for such a program to be implemented. Perhaps something has been done, but it is a bit like the gestation of the elephant. I will not go into the details, but all honourable members know what I mean.

Far from encouraging the keeping of exotic snakes and the release of venomous snakes in the Northern Territory, a permit system allowing people to keep reptiles under certain conditions would be a safe and positive move. Such a system would have to take into account the type of snake, whether it is a venomous species, a native or an exotic, and the age of the person seeking the permit. Such a system would do much more for the conservation of reptiles than the ostrich-like attitude which the Conservation Commission seems to be adopting.

I first raised this subject because I rather like reptiles myself and, to be quite frank, have kept them myself. Unfortunately, I do not keep them for very long because a member of my household expresses a certain antagonism towards snakes. He does not like them and therefore does not want them in the house. A couple of years ago, a young chap gave me the names of 17 people who were keeping reptiles illegally. They were interested in them. There must be many more people who are keeping reptiles illegally. If they declare this fact to the Conservation Commission, the reptiles are taken away. This does not encourage people to keep reptiles in a safe and conservation-orientated way. It does not encourage the growth of conservation values. Keeping snakes may not be everybody's cup of tea, but there are many people who are interested and, if children are interested, I believe that they should be encouraged.

The greater the number of permits to keep reptiles, the greater the number of eyes and ears to notice any wrongdoing. Something I am personally against, and which I have spoken against in this Assembly, is a black market in any of our wildlife species. When we fail to properly account for and control our wildlife, we encourage this black market. We lose important and rare species overseas. I can remember the albino python that was stolen from the Yarrowonga Zoo. It would fetch thousands of dollars overseas and could be quite easily carried in a suitcase. The lack of a permit system inhibits peoples' interest in these species and deprives us of many eyes and ears which would help the Conservation Commission. These people would be very interested in keeping their status legal so that they could continue to keep reptiles. Any illegalities or any suspicions of wrongdoing would be reported and therefore I cannot see why the Conservation Commission has such a problem with the introduction of a permit system.

As I have said before, it took me 1 afternoon to ring around the relevant authorities in Australia to find out about their legislation and regulations. There are variations from state to state and I cannot understand why it has taken at least 2 years for the Conservation Commission to sit down and nut out the policy that would best suit the Northern Territory and present that policy to the public.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, as usual, that was an interesting contribution by the member for Koolpinyah. I was interested to hear that the member herself has kept reptiles. I really cannot understand why politicians would want to keep reptiles as pets. I have always regarded them as more of an occupational hazard.

The member said one thing which I would like to take a step further. I refer to her concern about children in her electorate riding on the wrong side of the road. Whilst I do understand that, in many places in the Northern Territory, children need to ride their bikes on roads or the verges of roads, I would take it a step further and say that the best places for children to ride bikes are away from roads altogether. I do not want to bore honourable members again with accounts of my days as a meat wagon driver. I live in constant terror of the day when my own children insist on riding on the roads because children in the Northern Territory literally take their lives in their hands when they do so.

Peculiarly dangerous habits are adopted by bike riders in the Northern Territory, adults as well as children. One which particularly annoys me, because I think it is irresponsible for both the bike riders themselves and other users of the road, is the habit of riding on the road immediately adjacent to very expensive, publicly-funded bicycle paths. I imagine that professional drivers who spend a great deal of their lives on the road must find this infuriating. This practice is pernicious and it happens every day in this town. It is dangerous, and it is an expensive exercise for the community in terms of the drain on the public purse occasioned by accidents which are very distressing for the unfortunate drivers who may be driving in a very careful fashion themselves, but collide with people on bikes.

The other problem with bike riders in the Northern Territory is that they do not appear to consider that they are in any way inhibited by things called traffic lights. Time without number, I have seen cyclists, in peak hour traffic both in the morning and afternoon, sailing blithely through red lights as if those lights did not involve them at all. It is amazing that more fatal and serious accidents do not occur. Indeed, enough accidents involve cyclists now.

Mr Speaker, I want to canvass a few issues that have been raised before. One concerns the contribution made by the member for MacDonnell this evening concerning bus services for Palmerston. That concerns me too. I have been at Palmerston on a number of occasions recently, visiting a school, and it is clear that one concern at Palmerston, which will grow in future years, is that of social problems in respect of young children. I know that bus services are expensive to provide and that they run at a continual loss, no matter where they are provided. An earlier interjection by the Minister for Transport and Works, that we lose \$3.5m a year providing the existing services, was absolutely correct. I believe that the residents of Palmerston are as entitled to their share of the benefit of that expense to the taxpayers as the citizens who happen to be fortunate enough to live in Darwin.

When I was living in the constituency of another member, we were approached by constituents in that electorate to make representations for the provision of additional bus services, and did so, and I realised that that can be an exercise that produces very small results, if any at all. At that time, I succeeded in persuading the government to put on a bus service for a trial period to enable the residents of a caravan park to get to and from work, having been assured by the residents, who had been beating my door down, that they would utilise the service ...

Mr Dondas: Who turned up?

Mr B. COLLINS: Nobody. Feeling somewhat embarrassed by the fact that I had approached the government on this matter and it had acceded to the request, I travelled in lone splendour on the bus myself on more than one occasion. It cost me 30¢ each way to get into town. Certainly, it was a good way to get there. After 6 weeks, I could not complain when the government had to discontinue the service. Actually, the service ran for longer than 6 weeks.

However, if honourable members refer to the timetable for buses at Palmerston, they will see the difficulty. It means quite simply that you cannot travel to Darwin, where the major evening entertainment is provided, and catch a bus home. On a number of occasions, I have been approached by people who find it very frustrating and annoying that, if they come into town by bus for an evening, they do so in the certain knowledge that they will not be able to catch a bus back to Palmerston even at quite a reasonable hour. All I am suggesting to the honourable minister, and I dare say he has taken it on board and probably has it in train or has considered and rejected it ...

Mr Dondas: Denis has it in hand already.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I am encouraged by that response. If buses are provided on a trial basis on weekdays to take people back from Darwin at the hour at which the cinema, the entertainment centre and so on finish, and those services are not utilised dramatically, obviously the government would be quite entitled to discontinue that service. I was pleased to learn from that interjection that the government will respond to that request.

Mr Speaker, the member for Fannie Bay made his usual useless contribution to the adjournment debate by means of an interjection during the entreaties of the Leader of the Opposition about tenders. I found it an extremely interesting interjection in that he said, in respect of the person who has been left holding the bag and short of money by subcontracting to government contractors: 'So the imbecile does not have to use his own brains'. By extension of that logic, Mr Speaker, it would have to be said that the government ministers responsible for setting up the system that provided some embarrassing defaulters would have to be imbeciles also. I believe that the government would do very well indeed to have a close look at the problem the member for Millner raised. The level of bad debts in the Northern Territory and elsewhere in Australia is bad enough now.

Mr Speaker, I wish to address a matter which is of serious concern to myself and my constituents. This matter has been raised in the Assembly many times over the years, and it is continuing to be a problem. I refer to the appallingly high turnover of staff in some isolated schools. We all know that, at times, there are reasons which are no fault of the government or the department. On other occasions, there are situations where additional planning and a more sympathetic and imaginative approach would overcome the

problem. There have been 2 situations recently in my own electorate that have really caused me concern. One arose during the last few weeks. One is the situation at the Milikapiti school and the other relates to some statements made recently by a very senior officer, who is responsible for Aboriginal education, to a full meeting of the staff at Maningrida. Those statements disconcerted me profoundly, as they did the people there.

Milikapiti school has an establishment of 4 fully-trained teachers. At present, they are non-Aboriginal teachers. It is a very small school. As the member for Koolpinyah would know, because she visited the school when she was the local member, it is an excellent little school. Despite the fact that there has been an establishment of only 4 fully-trained teachers, by the beginning of the next school year, there will have been a turnover of 13 members of staff in the last 2 years. The parents of the children at Milikapiti are extremely concerned about that.

The last time I was over there, this matter was brought to my attention spontaneously. I walked around the town, as I normally do, chatting to people at their homes and, at house after house, the problem was mentioned. I think the situation was emphasised by the recently-announced movement of the principal of the school and his wife who is also a teacher there. That is a common situation in isolated communities. As I understand it, to date, 11 teachers have moved and, by the beginning of next year, it is highly likely that 2 other teachers will have moved, making a total of 13 teachers who have passed through that school in 2 years.

This situation is having a profoundly adverse effect on the education being provided to the children there. The parents are genuinely concerned about it. They are sick of the situation. I would like the honourable minister to have a look at it. Personally, I know the reasons why a few of the teachers have left. However, I believe the movement of teachers, in percentage terms, is inimical to the delivery of education in what I know the member for Port Darwin and the minister himself would concede is an extremely difficult area in which to provide educational services in the Northern Territory.

Mr Harris: I stayed there for 2 days, 4 or 5 weeks ago, Bob.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the honourable member is aware of the situation. It is a matter of some concern to me, and of great concern to the community at Milikapiti. I hope something can be done about it.

Mr Speaker, my concerns were heightened when 2 people from Maningrida contacted me. They were disturbed profoundly and, as I have now heard the same information from many people, I have no doubt it is correct. At a recent meeting of the staff of Maningrida school with a senior education officer from Darwin, that officer took to task a number of teachers who had been involved, in a totally cooperative way, at the invitation of the Aboriginal people concerned and in their own time, in a number of ceremonial activities that were being conducted by those people. This officer expressed the view that he did not want to see school teachers in Aboriginal communities becoming involved in those communities. He further put the view that, if he had his way, he would introduce a system where the salaries of teachers working in isolated communities would be reduced after 2 years as a positive incentive for those teachers to leave those communities.

It is an 'old welfare' situation, and I would not be permitted to use the expression that was used commonly in those days to typify that attitude because it would be unparliamentary. Certainly, a description that would be acceptable to the parliament is that you come in, you do not become involved and you leave quickly. Can I tell the Minister for Education that Aboriginal parents at Maningrida and Milikapiti want school teachers who want to become involved in the life of the community. I am genuinely dismayed - and I have heard it from too many school teachers to doubt that it was said - that, in 1986, those attitudes are still being expressed by people who are in very senior positions in the Department of Education and directly involved in Aboriginal education.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak tonight on the problems of the high level of alcohol consumption in Alice Springs, particularly amongst Aboriginal people, and about the efforts that are being made by Aboriginal people themselves to solve these problems. First, I would like to read a poem that was written by Colin McDonald, an Aranda person from central Australia. It is titled, 'A day in the Park'. It is a short poem and it makes a few basic points about the problem:

Under a tree in the park, he was found  
Lying there like he was asleep on the ground.  
In his ragged clothes and a bottle of goom,  
This lonely old man finally met his doom.  
He died quietly, this sad old man,  
Drunk, worn out and tired.  
But you know something sadder?  
Not one of us cried.  
So pass the bottle, brother,  
Hand around the mix.  
Drink up and be merry,  
For one of us is next.

Mr Speaker, I think that typifies the attitude now among Aboriginal people in Alice Springs: the fact that they are realising that they as individuals may be next.

I am not going to go into the details of my attitudes towards the 2 km legislation except to point out - and I think it is an accepted fact - that, while the legislation has had some effect in removing public drunkenness, it has precipitated a migration of drunks to the town camps where they have caused untold chaos and disruption to community life. It has not eradicated the problem; it has simply moved it somewhere else. It is in response to that particular problem that Aboriginal people in central Australia have made the latest round of attempts to bring to the fore the Aboriginal social club concept to deal with this particular problem.

The other day, I was doing some research on a completely different issue and I was looking through some old Centralian Advocates. I came across some references that I had made in 1979. It reminded me of how much support we had, even in 1979, for this concept in the community. Large numbers of people supported it back in those days. The problem then, as now, was land.

I am not the only one who is supporting this. Obviously, there are many members on the other side of the Assembly who are strong in their support. I would like to read part of a letter written to Mr Jeffrey Shaw of Tangentyere Council commending CAAMA on its 'Beat the Grog' campaign and stating that it was good to see members of the Aboriginal community showing their concern in such a matter:



On the question of social clubs for Aboriginals, you may remember that, several years ago at a meeting of Aboriginal people, I mooted the thought of an Aboriginal club but, at that time, the idea was too novel and did not receive support. But now the subject has risen again and I believe it is a very good idea. The club could be very good for the Aboriginal community and I have no doubt it can be run successfully. I am only too willing to support the idea of Aboriginal clubs in the Alice Springs community.

Mr Speaker, I would like to commend the writer of that letter. It is, of course, Senator Bernie Kilgariff. I would like to add my support to the statements that he has made in relation to social clubs. Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table some papers on Aboriginal social clubs in Alice Springs for the information of honourable members.

Leave granted.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I have enough copies there for all honourable members. Some members have already received these but I think it should be brought to mind again as the timing at the moment is extremely important.

There are a few points regarding the alcohol problem in Alice Springs which need to be stressed. For example, there are 6 times the number of drink driving offences in Alice Springs than for similar sized towns in New South Wales. The homicide rate in the Northern Territory is between 5 and 6 times the national average. The rate of serious assaults is at least 4 times greater in Alice Springs compared to Victoria. More than 70% of crime in the Northern Territory is alcohol related. In the Territory, alcohol abuse accounts for 70% of fatal road injuries, 72% of domestic violence and \$6m in hospital bed costs each year. In Alice Springs, we have 3 times the number of alcohol outlets per head of population than in Western Australia and Queensland.

Aboriginal people are attempting to establish social clubs. I think honourable members are now aware of many of the concepts involved with these. I have another paper which I will not ask leave to table because it is the only copy I have. But, it is available for any honourable member who would like to have a look at it. It goes into greater detail on the concept of the social club and it includes conceptual sketches. It points out the relationship between the wet areas and the dry areas, the facilities which provide food and the facilities for youth and sport. There is an attempt to introduce activities apart from the consumption of alcohol in order to reduce the abuse of alcohol. We are not attempting to have a completely dry society. We believe that will not happen. We simply want to reduce the over-indulgence in alcohol.

I would like to detail the sequence of events as set out in a letter that was sent to the minister by Mr Bill Ferguson of the Tangentyere Liquor Committee in the attempt to have land set aside for these clubs. I think it clearly illustrates the efforts that have been made to get this program under way. The letter describes how the Tangentyere Liquor Committee took advice from the Department of Lands and the predecessor of the current Minister for Lands as to the most justifiable option for presenting the club proposals to the public. As a result of advice from the department, the Tangentyere Liquor Committee went through the public display phase for rezoning applications. In addition, the committee maintained a dialogue with all sections of the community and received widespread support. Prior to the display period, a round table conference was held in Alice Springs on 6 May 1986. It was

attended by government bodies and other interested parties and its purpose was to discuss any concerns about the club concept. No major concerns were raised then or later. The input of the conference was supportive and provided valuable constructive comment to begin implementing the concept.

The Tangentyere Liquor Committee then distributed 4000 pamphlets in the locality of each club. In addition, the report on the concept went on public display in the town library. The committee stated its belief that the public had ample time to raise objections or to have input. The publicity campaign and the request for input was conducted over a period of 12 months on a very intensive basis and at all times the committee asked the public to be critical or to put forward ideas on the implementation of the project.

After the distribution of the information pamphlet, the committee did not receive a single critical letter. It did receive a number of letters from the general public in support of the club proposals. It has been supported, as members from that area would know, not just by the Centralian Advocate but in many letters to the editor. Many people from all walks of life have supported the concept and documents detailing letters of support, mainly from public figures, have been sent to the minister.

The committee relied heavily on the advice of officers of the Department of Lands to identify sites that would probably be acceptable to the public in general while still meeting the planning requirement for clubs to be in the vicinity of the Aboriginal population. I would like to concentrate on 2 areas: the north and the south. Those are the proposals which have progressed furthest and which have drawn the least critical comment.

The committee points out that the final selection of both those sites involved inspection and approval by Mr Roger Vale, the member for Braitling, and Mr Hanrahan, the member for Flynn. That meeting was a result of discussions held between Mr Darben of the Department of Lands and the 2 MLAs. The old archery site was the preferred option in the north area. The members for Braitling and Flynn visited the sites with the coordinator, Mr Bill Ferguson, and together they worked out adjustments to arrive at what all agreed would be suitable sites.

The committee is extremely concerned that there has been a deferral of the application to the Town Planning Authority and that this apparently is on the advice of the Minister for Lands. They are very worried that, if they lose their momentum at this stage, they will get out of kilter in their attempts to obtain loans from the Aboriginal Development Commission in the next cycle. There is a danger that the whole concept may die once again. That would be a shame, given the wide support that it has had from members of the CLP, the ALP, community leaders and from the Alice Springs community in general.

I understand that the matter is to go to the CLP's parliamentary party meeting and I would urge honourable members to take this as a positive sign of Aboriginal people trying to come to grips with it. I am not asking them to accept it simply on that basis, but to have a look at the concepts involved and at the alternatives and to see this as a positive attempt by Aboriginal people in Alice Springs to try to come to grips with the problem that they acknowledge they have and to find a means of alleviating, if not solving, that problem.

If members of the government would like any further information on the proposal before they discuss it further amongst themselves, I can arrange meetings with the Tangentyere Liquor Committee to give them a full briefing

and to answer any queries that they may have. I hope that any member who has any doubts about the proposal would avail himself of that opportunity before making up his mind on this matter.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

TABLED PAPER  
Land Matters Upon Statehood

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I present a document called Land Matters Upon Statehood. As foreshadowed in the attachment to my statement 'Towards Statehood' delivered on 28 August this year, I table a detailed option paper. This paper sets out the basic position of the Northern Territory government in relation to land in the Northern Territory upon a grant of statehood, and presents some options for dealing with land for the purpose of consultation prior to the making of any final decisions.

The basic premise of the paper is that the Northern Territory, as a new state, should be placed in a position of constitutional equality with the states. This means that the basic title to all land in the new state should belong to the new state and that all interests should be held by the new state under new state laws. This would include Aboriginal land and national parks. The paper advocates that the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act should be patriated to the new state and provides a number of options as to how this might be done. The first is that the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act would become a law of the new state and cease to be a law of the Commonwealth. It should be noted that any concurrent Commonwealth federal powers with respect to Aboriginal land in the states will continue to apply to the new state and will have an influence upon all the options.

The options for the content of this patriated or new act are set out in the paper. It also raises the question of whether traditional Aboriginal owners should have greater powers over their land and rights to change the nature of their land tenure if and when they accept such an option. Such options open up economic opportunities for traditional Aboriginal owners whilst preserving their continued ownership of the land and their beneficial rights. This is consistent with developments elsewhere for greater self-determination among traditional owners.

The basic position postulates that existing Aboriginal title will be guaranteed upon statehood. The paper raises a number of options as to the nature of those guarantees. The position of national parks held on leases from Aboriginal owners raises some concern, and the options for dealing with this are canvassed. The basic concept is that Aboriginals will continue to own the land but that the lease back would be from them to a Northern Territory authority rather than to a Commonwealth authority.

The addendum looks briefly at the position of aboriginal title in the USA and Canada. Further information is awaited to bring this up to date. This paper will be circulated widely and consideration is being given to the production of oral and visual aids to enhance the process of consultation on this matter which is of such importance to Territorians.

This discussion paper does not attempt to stifle any alternative options which may be put forward. However, the basic position of the Northern Territory, in terms of achieving constitutional equality with the states in its relationship with the land within its boundaries, must remain 1 of the cornerstones of Northern Territory statehood.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, it would be true to say that people on both sides of the political fence believe that this is probably the major issue involved in our move towards statehood. I think that, in some ways, the Chief Minister attempted to talk this down as an issue. I commended him for that at the time because I believed that there were other issues. There was and is a real danger that the whole concept of statehood will become involved in the matter of land. There are other issues that need to be discussed as well as land. It is no good putting our heads in the sand and believing that this issue will not create an enormous amount of discussion right across the Territory. I think the Chief Minister has made a tactical error, if you like, in that he has highlighted at an early stage what would appear to be his liking for alternative tenure provisions. What he has done is signal to people that there is another preferred option, an alternative option.

I would like to quote from the latest copy of Land Rights News to give some indication of the feeling that that has generated. I refer to a statement that is headed: 'Hatton Misleading Territorians'. The initial part uses the word 'patriated'. At least, the word is within inverted commas because it does not exist. 'Devolution' is the word, Mr Speaker. We should be referring to the devolution of the Land Rights Act. I quote:

In the latest of the Northern Territory government statehood series, it is stated that the key principle of inalienable freehold title will be dropped from any Northern Territory land rights law.

I believe that overstates the position adopted in that series, Mr Speaker. It goes on:

This principle is at the heart of land rights as it protects Aboriginal land from land sharks and real estate speculators. The land is held in trust in perpetuity for traditional owners for generations to come. This mechanism is also vital where there are wealthy non-Aboriginal interests looking out for any chance to exploit Aboriginal people's comparatively weaker financial situation.

Mr Hatton's government also insults Aboriginal people by making snide and unnecessary remarks about the Aboriginal organisations. The latest article in the series has the temerity to describe the people, whom traditional Aboriginal owners elect to represent them or pay to work for them, as unaccountable bureaucrats.

Worse, the article misleads people by its suggestion that land trusts are not made up of identifiable Aboriginal owners, nor controlled by them. They are a fact which is recognised in law and 9 years of practice. The article is a disgrace and makes Mr Hatton's reassurances look like a sham. Aboriginal people want to know what is going on. It is about time the Northern Territory government came clean and started proper consultation about statehood and the real intentions behind it.

It is very clear that the Chief Minister has a very long way to go. I can understand the fears that Aboriginal people, and certainly the traditional owners, have of any suggestion that there will be a change from inalienable freehold title to some other, as yet unspecified, scheme of group or individual ownership. Aboriginal people currently come under enormous pressure from mining companies and others who wish to gain some rights in respect of the land. There is no doubt in my mind that the efforts of con merchants who would put pressure on people under this alternative system, in

an attempt to get all sorts of harebrained schemes set up, would probably result in enormous mortgages being accumulated and the eventual loss of the title.

There have been examples of this already in the Northern Territory. The problem extends beyond the con merchants. In fact, the government agencies that operate with Aboriginal people, as part of their charter, have the idea that they are lenders of last resort. If the people have an asset, that asset must be mortgaged to the hilt before any other assistance can be given. For example, if the people are seeking to establish a project that has some social and some economic aspects, the pressure will be on the bureaucracy, whether it be Northern Territory or federal, to say to the people: 'Before we can provide you with assistance, you should go to the bank and mortgage your land'. That may be okay if we are talking about a strictly commercial operation. In the United States and Canada, when this method was tried before, that stage was referred to in those countries as the allotment schemes. They were foisted onto the Indian people and the schemes were an unmitigated disaster and resulted in large areas of land being lost to the Indian people.

A point needs to be made about devolution in that we should not mislead ourselves about the law. Devolution is not an absolutely essential component of statehood. I know that it is what the Chief Minister wants, and it is what many other people in the Northern Territory want. However, there are other people who do not want devolution and who believe that a national land rights act is what we should move towards. To some extent the Chief Minister concedes that, if there is a national land rights act, his argument for devolution is invalid. We have stated previously that, if there were national legislation, it should be non-uniform national legislation. We do not believe that legislation that is uniform across Australia would have any chance of looking after the variety of interests and cultural situations relevant to Aboriginal people.

We do not believe that a national, non-uniform land rights act would necessarily preclude a legislative ability of the Northern Territory government. For example, a federal act, as it pertained to the Northern Territory, could set out certain principles in certain areas, and the Northern Territory could legislate in areas outside of those particular principles. Even in that situation, I believe that it would be essential that various principles of land rights be embodied in the Northern Territory's constitution. It is 200 years too late but, obviously, in an ideal situation, the rights of the first inhabitants of a country should be willingly agreed to between those inhabitants and any new wave of occupiers.

In the best of all possible worlds, that agreement would be embodied in the national constitution as a joint statement by the original owner occupiers and the immigrants to say that that is how they will work together and that is the agreement by which they have established the new country. Of course, that has not happened as yet. However, through the constitutional development of the Northern Territory, we have an opportunity to take on board many of those issues. We can consider many of the problems that were not taken into account when the states and the federal government were involved with their own constitutional development, and we can attempt to avoid the mistakes they made.

That can be done in various ways. It can be effected by placing various levels of principle into the Northern Territory's constitution. For example, there could be a basic statement of principle regarding inalienable freehold

title which would be rather difficult to remove. The percentage in a referendum required to remove that would ensure that a substantial proportion of Aboriginal Territorians were also in agreement on it. That could be one method. Other principles could be included which required a lesser percentage of Territorians to be in agreement.

Another way would be for certain principles to be embodied in the constitution, and others embodied in the form of organic laws. In contrast to ordinary laws, organic laws generally require a longer period for or a different means of passage through parliament. Their passage might require a two-thirds majority or they might be required to lie before the parliament for a particular period before they could be passed. By that means, various levels of principles could be involved and various guarantees provided. It is essential that the Northern Territory government get down to the nitty gritty of negotiation in relation to those issues very quickly.

Mr Speaker, I want to comment on Uluru. I was rather surprised to see the context within which it was discussed in the options paper. I may have misunderstood this, and I am prepared to concede that. However, either the paper is not very clear about what is meant, or the Chief Minister is saying that he wants the title and the lease back. I think that the Chief Minister needs to recognise the Aboriginal ownership of Uluru at a very early stage. He needs to be represented on the Board of Management on the current offer by the federal government. However, I concede his right to maintain his position in respect of increased membership by the Northern Territory on the board whilst maintaining an Aboriginal majority and his contention that the Conservation Commission in the Northern Territory should be the manager of the park. We believe that that can be organised, at an earlier stage, by a sublease or something of that nature, if this government becomes involved there and starts to build a good relationship with the traditional owners, the people on the board.

It is essential that the government maintain contact. If 1 group operates inside the park and another outside, cooperation will be lost. We will only continue the very unfortunate divisions that were started by the previous Chief Minister. I believe that the present Chief Minister has a reasonably good name with people for the stand that he took. Some people may not understand the twists and turns of the tortuous path he followed in order to maintain some degree of morality and personal integrity while seeking to retain the various positions created by each of the 2 previous Chief Ministers. However, I think that the people believed that his heart was in the right place. If the government will participate on the board and build up confidence and goodwill with its members, I think it is still possible for the situation at Uluru to be changed to one which will satisfy even the Northern Territory government, and which will see a high degree of involvement of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. I am looking forward to that.

Mr Speaker, I will not speak further on the document. I am glad that the Chief Minister has tabled it as an options paper. I do not agree with everything in it, but I am glad that we have received it. We can start passing it around to those people who are extremely interested in this subject and commence discussion on it.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER  
Report of the Subordinate Legislation and  
Tabled Papers Committee

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table the twelfth report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee and move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not often speak on this sort of subject but there was 1 matter that came before us at our last meeting which was of particular relevance to my electorate. It also revealed a fairly major issue which, hopefully, the government will address. I refer to the revocation of reserves. The existing legal situation is that, if the government wants to revoke a reserve, it can do so. The revocation lies on the table for 6 days and, during that time, the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee looks at it and can either agree to it or not. It is most unlikely that the committee will not agree to it.

When we are looking at the revocation of reserves in urban areas, the government needs to develop a system that not only informs people in the area surrounding the park or the reserve but also provides them with some fairly firm guidelines on what sort of development the government is considering and is prepared to allow when the park area is revoked.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to say that, in the particular case which we were considering, reserve 1710, the committee resolved to write to the Minister for Lands and he replied outlining the basis on which he proposed to consider development proposals for that particular park. However, that was done simply because a member of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee took a personal interest in the matter, raised it with the committee, and the minister responded promptly. We have probably set a useful precedent in doing that. I would like the government to examine, as I know the committee will do at its next meeting, the possibility of extending what we did in this particular case. I would like to see a set of guidelines developed under which the government would provide the committee with the broad details of the types of use that the government proposes for the reserve area and the broad conditions under which that area would be developed. I think that would be a very useful exercise and would allay the concerns of residents.

In the case of reserve 1710, residents had a number of concerns. Due to the efforts of the minister, the Secretary of the Department of Lands and myself, we were able to come up with a satisfactory resolution for at least the great majority of the residents. That is something that should not be left to the individual energy of the local member. It is something which is important enough for the government to attend to when it puts the revocation notice in place.

To conclude, there has been a valuable lesson learned from this exercise. I know the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee intends to follow it through and I hope it receives sympathetic consideration from the government.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition raised a number of issues which I agree with as a member of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee. However, he failed to point out that we are talking particularly about reserves that are set aside, under section 103 of the Crown Lands Act, for the recreation of the public. Honourable members will note that, from time to time, we revoke other reserves such as road



reserves and water reserves. I do not believe that the problem lies there. It is not peculiar to metropolitan areas. There may be occasions where the government is required or wishes to revoke a reserve in 1 of the smaller townships. I think that any policy we put in place should relate to all recreation reserves in the Northern Territory.

In support of what the Leader of the Opposition has said, I believe that planning procedures should be put in place jointly with any action taken by government to revoke reserves. The planning procedures relate to the necessary applications put before the relevant planning authorities in relation to the future use of that land. Normally, a recreation reserve in an urban area will be zoned O1 or O2. Before it can be used for any purpose other than for public recreation, that land has to be rezoned. Normally, it would require some subdivisional approval also. I can see no reason why the planning procedures cannot go through almost to the stage where the minister assents to the rezoning before the reserve is revoked. The planning instruments would be completed, it would be laid on the table in the Assembly and, in normal circumstances, we would have 3 or 4 months to examine the revocation and members of the general public would have a chance to see what was proposed for the land without necessarily holding up the process. The revocation and the planning authority approval processes would be carried out at the same time. At the moment, we are revoking the reserve and then proceeding to seek planning approvals.

Motion agreed to.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE  
Toxic Waste Disposal Facility

Mr SPEAKER: I have received the following letter from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

Dear Mr Speaker,

I wish to propose, under standing order 94, as a definite matter of public importance, the failure of the Northern Territory government to take proper account of the desires of the people in and around Tennant Creek, in that it has continued to promote the development of a toxic waste disposal facility in the area.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Ede,  
Member for Stuart.

Is the proposed discussion supported? The discussion is supported.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, this is the second time that I have addressed the Assembly on this issue. The first was in an adjournment debate when I raised a number of serious matters about the proposal. In response, the member for Barkly suggested that I go away and get the facts. I have done so, and I am frankly horrified that this proposal is still under serious consideration by this government.

The member for Barkly wanted the facts and I will give them to him. The first fact is as follows, and we need no other to blow a mushroom-shaped hole in this ill-conceived scheme. The actual hazards involved with a high temperature incinerator are not known. The scientific basis for this

assertion is three-fold. Combustion is largely an uncontrolled chemical reaction in which it is conceivable that any organic material may be formed.

Mr Palmer: He has got his high school physics book out.

Mr EDE: You had better believe it.

Secondly, a molecule trapped in a particular matrix may not be heated to the incineration temperature. If it is, it can be attacked by a reactive radical chemical.

Mr Perron: Do you know anything about this at all?

Mr EDE: This might be a mouthful, but it is very important that honourable members listen carefully if they are interested in making an informed contribution to this debate.

Thirdly, fundamental combustion characteristics of chlorinated hydrocarbons are not understood well enough to make definitive predictions on the chemistry and rates of oxygenation.

We now come to the by-products of a high-temperature toxic waste incinerator, and this is really the sort of country in which sensible governments fear to tread. High temperature incinerators, with pollution control devices, have not been shown to destroy nor to remove hazardous organic constituents consistently and effectively from stack emissions. New and unknown compounds form during the incineration process if combustion is not complete. Some of these by-products are more toxic than the original compounds being burnt. Incinerator ash may contain hazardous residues.

I could understand this government's desire to set up a toxic waste incinerator if we generated the waste. But we do not.

Mr Perron: That is really responsible, that is.

Mr EDE: The whole of Australia does not generate 10% of the waste the government proposes to put through this incinerator. Australia produces approximately 1500 t of toxic waste a year. The Territory produces 0.6% of this total. 80% of Australia's toxic waste is generated by a single company in Sydney, ICI. The disposal of Australia's toxic waste is a national problem. It is my view that it should be carried out by an appropriate Commonwealth authority and as close as possible to where it is produced. Australia should not be getting into the business of disposing of any other country's chemical garbage.

There are 3 main types of toxic waste. First are the dioxins, which are by-products of the manufacture of the defoliant 245T, commonly known as Agent Orange. Dioxins are regarded as being 2000 times more lethal than cyanide. Next we have the polychlorinatedbiphenyls, the PCBs. They are industrial chemicals, once widely used as coolants and insulators for electrical equipment, which were banned when their high toxicity became known. Finally, we have the chlorinated hydrocarbons. These include solid and liquid by-products of plastics manufacturing. Sustained contact with any of these chemicals can cause life-long contamination. The illnesses involved include cancers, birth defects and diseases of the liver, lungs and the nervous system. They accumulate in the body tissues of humans and animals. They enter the biological cycle and they never disappear.

Figures provided by the Department of Mines and Energy show that an incinerator, even operating at peak efficiency, would release 20 kg into the air each year. The desert is a fragile environment. It was not created to take that sort of pressure. What would be released from such a plant if there were a fire or some other disaster? It does not bear thinking about. The consequences of such an accident would be horrendous.

One of my major concerns about the establishment of this incinerator is the transportation of the chemicals. We have had 2 recent cases of trucks spilling large amounts of sodium cyanide on the Stuart Highway. The most recent incident involved a road train carrying about 450 drums of sodium cyanide which hit a motorcycle and overturned spilling drums all over the highway. I picked up pieces of sodium cyanide off that highway 3 weeks after the accident. So much for the government clean up.

Mr Tuxworth: You probably planted it there.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, that really is ridiculous.

Mr Tuxworth: But that is the level of your mentality.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, that really is the sort of contribution I would expect of Toxic Tuxworth.

This government demonstrated its cavalier attitude to the issue by trying to embarrass me in relation to my giving some of this chemical to members of the media to present to the Department of Mines and Energy. When media representatives presented the samples to the Department of Mines and Energy, it would not accept them. The media representatives were told that the department did not accept such things from the general public. It was a different story when the media finally caught up with the roving Minister for Mines and Energy. He directed them to get the samples to the department immediately.

Mr Speaker, I believe this sorry episode demonstrates how disorganised this government is in relation to the handling of toxic chemicals in the Territory. The disgraceful, nitpicking attitude demonstrated by those opposite in pursuing this aspect of that particular accident has probably scared any member of the public away from reporting the presence of such chemicals in the event of any future accidents.

Transportation is potentially the most dangerous aspect of the incineration cycle. 5000 accidents involving the transportation of dangerous substances were reported in the United States in 1984. The causes of these accidents were of course myriad. They included human error relating to incorrectly labelled chemicals, punctured containers, inadequately trained emergency service personnel, badly loaded goods and conflicting state regulations. These factors accounted for the majority of those accidents. Unfortunately, we cannot legislate to prevent accidents.

The Territory has 1 of the worst industrial road tolls in the country. In 1984-85, there were 24 accidents involving road trains, resulting in 5 fatalities. 15 accidents involved semitrailers and 65 involved trucks. If this incinerator were in place, any one of those accidents could have involved a road train, semitrailer or truck carrying dioxins. In my view, that risk is not worth taking for 30 jobs.

We are assured by the ever-vigilant Department of Mines and Energy that laws will be passed to fully regulate the transportation of toxic waste to this proposed incinerator. We already have laws governing the transportation of dangerous goods but the last road train that spilled sodium cyanide over the Stuart Highway was not adequately marked, the cyanide was not safely loaded and the driver was not licensed to carry dangerous goods. The government is still trying to decide whether it can pass on the cost of the clean-up to the transport firm and, to my knowledge, has taken no legal action arising from the incident.

Mr Speaker, those are not actions of a government which sees the need to convince Territorians that it can handle the most toxic substances on earth. Recently, an action group in Tennant Creek interviewed Mr Vrenegoor, 1 of the engineers who designed the plant at Viborg in Denmark on which the Tennant Creek plant is to be modelled. I have a video of the interview with Mr Vrenegoor, and any member is welcome to look at it. I recommend that members do so because he explains many technical aspects which have not been raised by the government, and many of the problems associated with the toxic waste incinerator in much better terms than my feeble efforts can.

One of Mr Vrenegoor's main fears about the Territory's proposal is that Australia does not have a uniform code for the classification of dangerous wastes. The European waste experience has taught him that, for the safe incineration of waste, it is crucial to know exactly what materials are being incinerated. There is also a high risk of chemicals being mislabelled deliberately because some are cheaper than others to incinerate. If certain chemicals are combusted together, the results, including fires, explosions and emissions of lethal gases, can be disastrous. All these dangers are increased by the importation of toxic waste from South-east Asia where there is even less consistency in the kind of goods to be burnt. Mr Vrenegoor was extremely doubtful about the Territory government's ability and expertise to monitor such a dangerous operation.

I will now demonstrate that the location of a toxic waste incinerator in Tennant Creek is a completely impractical proposal. I have already covered the transportation dangers so I will not go into them again but I must give honourable members a science lesson. The incineration of toxic waste is not just a matter of throwing a few drums into the incinerator. Careful calculations are involved which revolve around the calorific rating of various waste compounds. If the calorific rating is too low, the necessary temperatures are not achieved.

Mr Finch: What does it mean?

Mr EDE: I will give you a lesson on it later.

If it is too high, there is a risk of blowing up the plant or having to release gases which have not been correctly incinerated.

There are 2 very important and highly relevant points that come out of this. First, a wide range of wastes is needed on site so that the cocktail with the correct calorific rating can be made up. This would involve bringing in many wastes which, while they might not be highly toxic, would have high calorific ratings. We do not have our own supply of these wastes locally. They would have to be shipped in. These low-toxic, high-calorific rating wastes can be far more cheaply disposed of elsewhere. Who wants to spend thousands of dollars shipping these wastes to Tennant Creek if they can be disposed of locally in South-east Asia or wherever? If we do not have them on

site, our ability to make up the cocktail for incineration will be severely restricted.

The second point is even more important. We are dealing here with very complex and complicated compounds. It is necessary to know, within a fairly narrow range, what is in the waste. This is not just so that its calorific rating can be determined, but so that the optimum combustion temperature to ensure full incineration can be ascertained. Before Europe was able to go into this process in a big way, a categorisation system had to be established which was standard right throughout Europe. It was arrived at eventually. In Australia, we do not even have standardised categories between the Australian states. We certainly do not have standardised categories worked out with any 1 country in South-east Asia, let alone with the whole region.

Third world countries are notorious for their lack of regulation of wastes. We cannot trust the multinationals operating in those countries to abide by some voluntary code of standards. We certainly cannot enforce any of our own legislative controls on nations outside our own boundaries. We could claim a breach of contract and refuse to accept any more waste from a particular company on the grounds that it did not provide us with materials within the classifications agreed on. I say that we could, but would a particular private enterprise company - would, for example, a Peko Rambo Wallsend, or whatever company the government gets to run this plant - refuse to accept waste from a major supplier that broke a voluntary code? It is a load of rubbish if anybody says that they believe that that is what would happen in the real world.

Mr Speaker, the reason why the major incinerators are run by governments and government authorities in Europe is so that they can maintain that control. I do not think that private companies will maintain that voluntary code. As I have said before, this government stresses self-regulation for business. We are told that the government does not need to provide inspectors and so on. Would this government ensure that regulations were complied with adequately? I do not think so, and the people of Tennant Creek do not think so.

I could continue, but my time is running short and I feel that the examples I have given are sufficient for the purposes of this exercise. I suggest that something is happening here, and the member for Barkly does not know what it is. A significant body of informed people in Tennant Creek are offside with the local member and his CLP cronies. They do not want the toxic trash of Asia and the rest of Australia cremated in their backyards - and who can blame them? A petition is circulating currently in Tennant Creek opposing the establishment of this facility. So far, 1596 people have signed it. I have a copy of that petition. Unfortunately, it is not in the correct form and I cannot table it as a petition in the usual way. It states:

We, the undersigned, do not want a toxic waste incinerator and dump in the Tennant Creek area or elsewhere in the Northern Territory. We do not produce this toxic waste in the Northern Territory, and believe that it should be disposed of where it is produced, or not produced at all.

It bears 1569 signatures, Mr Speaker, and I seek leave to table that petition.

Leave granted.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, 1569 people represent more than half the population of Tennant Creek. Some people from the surrounding communities may have signed. It indicates a massive rejection of this Northern Territory government proposal by the people of that area. At 1 stage, the government said that, if the people of the town did not want it, the idea would be dropped. That petition demonstrates that the people of Tennant Creek do not want it. It is now up to the government to drop the idea.

It is a fact that the member for Barkly cannot tell this Assembly, with any honesty, that a toxic waste incinerator can be established in Tennant Creek, without running the risk of a horrendous environmental accident. Let me say, here and now, that we are totally opposed to it. I will do everything in my power to ensure that such a facility is never established in the Northern Territory.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to the matter of public importance raised by the member for Stuart, I would like to say that this government's actions in relation to a high temperature toxic waste incinerator do not sit at all well with its action in trying to gain acceptance for this facility. The community at Tennant Creek, especially the Aboriginal residents, have demonstrated quite clearly that they do not want this toxic waste incinerator in their town or in the surrounding areas. This government is not prepared to listen to the views of the people of Tennant Creek. It has gone even further. It has tried to deny the existence of Aboriginal people in the area for which this facility has been targeted.

During a previous debate on this issue, the member for Barkly told this Assembly that no people live west of the proposed incinerator site. In saying that, he said the prevailing winds blew from the east to the west so that the land to the west was where the toxic residue would come to rest. In fact, hundreds of Aboriginal people live on the outstation communities in the surrounding areas, as the member for Barkly would know. This government has actively opposed the land claims of the people in that area. The Aboriginal people are not surprised by the member for Barkly's attempts to dispossess them of their land. He has done this before. No one could forget his attempts to stop the hand over of Uluru National Park to its traditional landowners. \$300 000 was spent by this government in an attempt to deny the people of that area their land by telling the Australian public that those people were not Territorians.

The actions of this government have always spoken louder than its words. Once again, this is the case with this toxic incinerator. When the Minister for Mines and Energy toured South-east Asia recently, offering part of the Territory as a dump for poisonous waste, he did not consult many of those people whom I would refer to as my countrymen in that area. As the minister travelled throughout the South-east Asia region, a group of traditional Aboriginal owners followed his progress with interest and sent urgent telexes of complaint to the embassies and the newspapers around Australia and South-east Asia. Their message warned:

Barry Coulter, Minister for Mines and Energy from the Northern Territory of Australia, is presently in your country to conduct talks. We want you to know that he does not represent the views of the indigenous people from the Jurnkurakurr, Tennant Creek, group in regard to the proposal to establish a high temperature toxic waste incinerator in our traditional country.

In fact, I would not be surprised if the Minister for Mines and Energy did not even consult some of those people in that area that have claims and traditional rights to some of the areas around Tennant Creek. I quote again:

We asked for the minister's resignation last week, for undertaking a toxic waste marketing trip overseas, despite his government's complete lack of consultation about the siting of the incinerator on our traditional hunting and food collecting grounds.

We do not produce toxic waste. We live with the land, and we have done so from the beginning. The Northern Territory government refuses to recognise our rights as the original Australian people. They continue to treat us, who respect the land, with contempt.

The visit of Mr Coulter to your country is another instance where our lives and our country are being rubbished so that others may profit.

The telex was signed by 54 senior traditional representatives of the Tennant Creek region. The laudable sentiments expressed by the Minister for Community Development do not sit with the actions and words of the Minister for Mines and Energy, and I refer to the Minister for Community Development's statements in respect of the self-determination policy which he outlined the other day. Nor do they reflect the comments made by the member for Barkly. It is no accident that the Minister for Mines and Energy is on another overseas trip, but this time he is trying to denigrate the natural values of Aboriginal land at Kakadu National Park.

The Aboriginal people of Tennant Creek do not want a toxic waste incinerator anywhere near their country. They have looked after that country for 40 000 years, and this government is telling them now that it is planned to dump the most dangerous wastes produced by European culture on them. Let there be no doubt that they are extremely concerned about the effects of toxic emissions from such a facility. Mr Speaker, I refer to the number of people who live around Tennant Creek, people from as far as Wave Hill, Warrabri, Wauchope and other areas. They have been known to hunt traditionally for food. They have gathered food and hunted in that area for a long time. If a toxic waste incinerator is situated in that region, they may be forced to depend on food from shops. Recently, they set out their concerns through a newspaper column. I would like to quote from that:

Many of the Wumparrarni Warramunga speakers have learnt a new English word. That word is toxic. This is another word for poisonous. Aboriginal people living in town are worried about the smoke from the incinerator which will blow our way when the north-west wind comes to town. This smoke may contain poison which will be breathed in without anyone knowing about it.

People living at Warrego (west of Tennant Creek) are also worried about the effects of toxic waste smoke on the country. The area around Warrego is often used for hunting kangaroo, bush turkey and goanna. Bush tucker such as sugar-bag, (wild honey) and large yams (bush potato) is collected there too.

Honourable members would not know about the types of food that Aboriginal people collect within that area.

What will be the effect of the fall-out from the incinerator on the food? The bush turkeys eat the grasshoppers that eat the grass that

smoke has landed on. The bees collect the pollen from the flowers and the trees that the toxic waste smoke has covered. The yams lie in the ground soaking up the water from the surface where the toxic waste has landed. One of the reasons white people came to Australia in the first place was to solve their own problems. Then the British government tested its atomic bombs on Aboriginal land in South Australia. The experts said there would be no effects on us. Those tests went ahead and we are still hearing of sickness and deaths from this. This time we must stop our air and lives being poisoned.

In times past, this government has been able to set Territorians against Territorians on the issue of land rights. I have mentioned the anti-Uluru campaign. I can give no better example. However, that ploy is not working in relation to this issue. The government's action in proposing a high temperature toxic waste incinerator has united black and white residents in Tennant Creek. The member for Stuart has mentioned the petition which has been circulated in the area and signed by many people. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Territorians have combined in a unique protest to this government. The member for Barkly and his colleagues want to set a toxic fire near Tennant Creek but so far they have ignited only a new sense of unity and cooperation in a community often divided by racial conflict. In that regard, perhaps this proposal will bring some positive action. Many European residents in the area are now learning much about Aboriginal culture, traditions and respect for their land because they themselves are worried about the effects the proposal will have on the land.

The petition was circulated in both English and Waramungu languages. As the member for Stuart has pointed out, it demands a halt to this proposed project. Town councillors, Aboriginal representatives and local residents have condemned their local member, yet this proposal is still on the government's agenda. It should be consigned to the dustbin.

We have been advised that the government intends to have these poisonous wastes transported to Darwin by sea and then trucked down to Tennant Creek. This government's own uranium adviser and expert on the nuclear industry stated, in a recent report about the storage of high-level radioactive waste, that such material should not be brought in through the Darwin area the region is prone to cyclones. Surely the same would apply to this waste?

There is no need for this plant in Tennant Creek. There are far cleaner ways of generating employment in the area. This government should be investigating the possibilities of establishing tourist trips through prospective gold areas and the Hatches Creek region. It should be looking at establishing an appropriate technology workshop supplying outstations. It could also look at establishing a caravan park and water sports area around the Mary Ann Dam. A sealed road to Lajamanu would bring another 500 to 600 consumers to the town as they use the back road down Rabbit Flat way to Yuendumu. These are all possibilities that could be investigated to generate employment and stimulate the local economy. The residents of Tennant Creek do not want their area to become the toxic trash bin for Asia.

In his policy speech on Aboriginal affairs, the Minister for Community Development told members that this government had employed Professor Turner with an unrestricted brief to advise whether the government's policies and programs were in tune with Aboriginal expectations. I suggest that this government ask Professor Turner to deliver a report on how this toxic incinerator will affect traditional owners in the region. We in the opposition do not need to be told, but clearly this government does.



Mr McCARTHY (Conservation): Mr Speaker, the waverings of the previous speaker were rather amazing because I thought that this matter of public importance was 1 that the opposition truly wanted to debate and, in fact ...

Mr Ede: You couldn't even find another speaker to talk on the issue. What are you talking about?

Mr McCARTHY: In fact, he went on to talk about a whole range of issues that have nothing at all to do with intractable wastes. The disposal and management of hazardous industrial wastes has been identified clearly as a major problem in Australia. There is no doubt that it is a problem in all industrialised countries. Australia has no suitable facilities for the disposal of a significant range of hazardous industrial wastes. The absence of adequate management plans can have serious adverse environmental, economic and social implications.

The Australian Environment Council has been discussing this issue for some years. The National Strategy for the Management of Intractable Waste 1985 concluded that a high temperature toxic waste incinerator should be established in an environmentally-secure location and that the facility should be controlled by a suitable government agency which, in the case of the Northern Territory, would be the Industrial Safety Division of the Department of Mines and Energy.

As a responsible member of AEC, the government is investigating a proposal to build such a facility in the Territory. It is doing no more than that. It is undertaking an investigation, as are 2 other states of Australia, at the behest of the AEC and the federal Minister for the Environment. The Territory is doing nothing more than investigating, and I think that should be emphasised over and over again. We are investigating a proposal that the Northern Territory be a potential site for an industrial waste disposal facility.

Western Australia and Victoria are investigating waste disposal facility proposals as well. The federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment, Mr Barry Cohen, suggested the formation of a committee comprising representatives of Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory to assess the merits of various proposals for the construction of a waste disposal facility. It must be stressed that we are still at a very early stage in our investigations. Nothing firm can occur in relation to such a facility in the Territory until a definite proposal on the disposal of toxic wastes is put before us and an environmental impact study is completed. No environmental impact study is possible without a firm proposal, and I am sure that the member for Stuart is aware of that. We must have a proposal before we can work out what the environment impact will be.

The initial survey was nothing more than a desk top exercise which considered, on the broadest of scales, the potential for siting such a facility in 1 of 5 regions in the Territory, using a set of criteria based on international experience. On the basis of site selection on the criteria prepared by the consultants, it followed that there was a prima facie case that the Tennant Creek region was a preferred locality for any such facility in the Northern Territory. That prima facie case indicated there could be more study of that particular area. Although these preliminary proposals indicated the Tennant Creek region to be the most suitable site for any possible waste disposal facility, at this stage there is no proposal before the government for the construction of such a facility.

Mr Speaker, the Department of Mines and Energy has sought to answer all the questions being raised by the community in regard to this project, and has been largely successful in this regard. I have before me a whole range of facts - facts, not the fiction the opposition seeks to recount in this Assembly. I have facts to provide to the people of the Northern Territory, particularly those in Tennant Creek. These facts have been provided by the Department of Mines and Energy and are being published in the local papers in the Tennant Creek region at the behest of the people who live there. They are having a great deal of effect. There is a very noisy minority somewhere in the Territory, and we saw it in Tennant Creek recently. It consisted mainly of blow ins, by the way, and probably most of the signatures on the petition tabled by the member for Stuart came from the same sort of people. There are as many tourists as there are locals, I would suspect.

As I said, the Department of Mines and Energy has sought to answer all of the queries being put forward, and it has done this very publicly. It has to be stressed that, if a waste disposal facility is built in the Territory, it may not necessarily be located near Tennant Creek.

Mr Ede: May not necessarily?

Mr McCARTHY: It may not necessarily be located near Tennant Creek and we would be not doing our job if we discarded the options. As I indicated, on a prima facie basis, the best option was Tennant Creek. That will be decided by an environmental impact and feasibility study, and a pre-feasibility study is being undertaken at this stage.

It is essential to establish what sorts of waste materials would be involved in the operation of any waste disposal unit. As a result, the Minister for Mines and Energy has written to key industrial and commercial operators advising them that: (1) The Territory is considering the establishment of an industrial waste disposal facility with a high-temperature incinerator; and (2) the Territory has commissioned a pre-feasibility study by the Bechtel International Higher Technology group. We are doing this at the behest of the AEC, which has asked all states to look at the potential for such a facility in their area. We are doing that.

This study is a response to the types of questions that have been raised about the possible location of a waste disposal facility in the Territory. This pre-preliminary feasibility study is being undertaken to establish, first of all, that such a facility can be operated safely. Obviously, that takes first priority, and not just for the 6 people sitting on the opposition benches. It is a first priority for everyone in the Territory, and we are the spokespersons for everybody in the Territory. On this side of the Assembly, we are responsible people, and we will ensure that such a facility will operate only on a safe basis.

The study will also take into account price comparisons, siting criteria, investigation of how safeguards apply to such establishments overseas, capital and operating costs, and transport and operating experience overseas. These aspects are all very significant. The Bechtel pre-feasibility study is being undertaken to resolve a host of unanswered questions. It can hardly be suggested, at this extremely preliminary stage of investigation when no site has been selected, that the government has failed to take into account the desires of the people of Tennant Creek or, for that matter, the people of the entire Territory. That cannot be argued. We have been quite open in this discussion. The execution of environmental analysis of alternative sites and ultimate selection of a favoured site will be very costly and can proceed only

when and in conjunction with a full-scale feasibility study. I must stress that we are not in that phase at this stage. It must be emphasised that the Bechtel study is not a full-scale study.

If the Territory gets to the stage of an environmental analysis, naturally it will take into account geographic and environmental considerations, the design of environmental safeguards, transport requirements and the impact on the local community of the construction of a waste disposal unit. As Hon Barry Cohen, the federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment, pointed out - and the Territory government fully endorses this - in view of community concern about hazardous wastes, it would seem appropriate that government engender public confidence by making it apparent that adequate controls and standards will be applied.

And what about public confidence over this, Mr Speaker? A video of Bonny Bridge, in Scotland, is being bandied around. I assume that the member for Stuart may have had something to do with that since I understand he was in attendance at places where that was shown. That video has been clearly shown to be false. The Bonny Bridge Jetty Morbidity Review found that the death rate among humans in the Bonny Bridge area was no different from the rate anywhere else in the world. In fact, cattle deaths were occurring because there were high superphosphate levels in the soil from farming in that region. That video has been completely discredited.

Mr Speaker, the Territory government wants to do exactly what the federal government wants to do in terms of putting a logical and rational viewpoint to the people of the Northern Territory and not to go around scaremongering for purely political purposes like this opposition. As I have said, there is still a long way to go before the submission of an environmental impact study. The study will be subject to established public review procedures.

It was interesting to note the comments of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He stated that there were no national standards in place in Australia for intractable waste. Not only is the AEC working on those guidelines, which have been made available for public comment, but an integral part of the establishment of a facility would be the establishment of a set of national guidelines. We could not put it into place until we had some national guidelines. There is no way it will happen because we can do it only with the agreement of the AEC. We would have to consult with the working group of the AEC, of which we are a part, on the establishment of a set of national guidelines for intractable waste.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition's scientific observations are highly questionable. I can provide him with access to appropriate technical staff who have told me they would be delighted to straighten him out. For instance, his observation that combustion characteristics of organo-chlorides are unknown is open to question. It would appear that they cannot be substantiated by the technical data available. The same technical data is available to the Commonwealth Environment Minister and all state Environment Ministers as well as the AEC and a number of prestigious national environment bodies. Many of them have endorsed the formation of such a waste disposal facility. Indeed, the May 1986 edition of the Northern Territory ALP Platform, No 55 includes: 'Develop a program for the safe destruction of toxic hazardous waste and cooperate with the federal government's hazardous chemicals program, including its initiatives to develop a national strategy for managing hazardous waste'. The members opposite come in here and argue that they would not do it, Mr Speaker, yet it is a part of their policy.

Once again, I refer the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to the technical data available from the Department of Mines and Energy in relation to the point he raised on transport. I agree that this is a crucial question that must be answered satisfactorily. There is no way that we can transport material like that until we have worked out the guidelines and the safety procedures required.

I might indicate that there is a little film at the beginning of the Channel 8 television news which shows a train smashing into a container. That container is of the sort that would be used to transport this kind of waste by road or sea. There was no damage to that container. We have all seen that film on TV.

Mr Ede: This is scientific education.

Mr McCARTHY: I am sure it is, Mr Speaker. But, at least, it is as real as what he was proposing.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition was guilty of dragging a red herring across the scene when he started drawing comparisons between the recent cyanide spill and the likely difficulties concerning the transport of intractable waste. We know that intractable waste will have to be transported under much safer conditions than are currently established although there is no doubt that our safety record is better than that of the honourable member. He has been quite prepared to distribute cyanide around in envelopes. There are codes for the handling of dangerous materials and codes relating to the construction of containers used in the transportation of such goods. I would refer the Assembly to the Code of Practice for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Substances. Any code governing the transport of intractable goods would have to be similar to that.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that we are a long way from establishing a waste disposal facility in the Northern Territory and certainly have not decided on Tennant Creek as the site for any such facility at this stage. The construction of such a facility is subject to the findings of a series of surveys and investigations, including an environmental impact study. Only then will we be in a position to make a decision.

To say that the government has decided to put such a facility at Tennant Creek is false. Tennant Creek was shown to be 1 of the most likely places for such a facility. If someone told me that any state considering setting up such a facility was thinking of siting it on the coast next to a large centre of population, I would be very surprised. Kalgoorlie was being considered.

Mr Ede: Is it too dangerous?

Mr McCARTHY: No. Places in the centre have a more stable and drier environment.

We are certainly not, as the opposition would like to have the Assembly believe, failing to take proper account of the desires of the people of Tennant Creek.

#### PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 252)

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 the bill is to enable certain organisations, established to provide local government-type services, to be relieved of payroll tax liabilities. The Payroll Tax Act provides an exemption from payroll tax for local governing bodies. This term is not defined in the act. However, only authorities which derive their power from the Local Government Act are presently covered by the exemption.

In the Territory, local government services are provided through a variety of organisations, some formally created under the Local Government Act and others operating under different legislation. The majority of these bodies have been determined to be local governing bodies for the purpose of the Local Government Grants Commission Act. The amendment introduces a definition which will cover local governing bodies created under the Local Government Act, as well as those recognised under the Local Government Grants Commission Act. It will thus enable organisations carrying out similar functions to be accorded uniform treatment under the Payroll Tax Act.

The amendment will also ensure that wages related to Community Development Employment projects carried out by these organisations will not be subject to payroll tax. This accords with similar arrangements in the states. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Amendment Bill (Serial 242) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

#### CRIMINAL LAW (CONDITIONAL RELEASE OF OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 242)

Continued from 19 November 1986.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, this bill serves 2 principal purposes. The first is related to the present circumstance whereby the failure of an offender to pay a fine will make him a guest of Her Majesty in our overcrowded prisons. The second sets up a system of community service orders according to which offenders can perform work in the community instead of being a drain on the taxpayer in penal institutions.

The opposition supports the bill. We do not believe that there is anything particularly productive about putting people in jail simply because they are unwilling or, because of their economic circumstances, unable to pay a fine. Jailing such people places a burden upon the general community, as prison detention is very expensive. We concur with the minister that there are more productive ways in which such people could spend their time.

The second part of the bill introduces the concept of community service. It is the method by which these people will repay society for their offence, whatever small offence it may be. I appreciate the minister's reasons for

introducing the bill. The crowding within our jails has probably precipitated the rapid introduction of this legislation. The other reason is to try to find some social answer to our endemic crime problems in the Northern Territory.

Whilst I concur with his reasons, to see this simply as a method of emptying our jails would be incorrect. There are people who necessarily deserve to serve time within prison because of their offence against society. However, the minister said, in his second-reading speech, that such people will not be affected by this legislation. If our jails remain crowded and the prison population continues to increase, I am certain that this legislation will not be enough and we may need to develop proposals within the prison system that will enable us to hold more people.

I am sure members from Alice Springs are aware of the endemic problems of prison accommodation in Alice Springs. I appreciate that the department has done much to overcome that but the facility is very old. I do not believe that it can continue to operate as a prison. I hope that the government will look at replacing that building. I find it very spooky, actually, to go inside the old jail in Alice Springs. However, that aside, it is a terrifying place. I make no bones about that.

We support the legislation. We hope that it will serve not only to reduce the prison population but also to provide some social answers to our endemic crime problems.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I have much pleasure in giving this legislation my full support. The proposal to have offenders contribute towards the community whose rules they have offended is eminently sensible. The alternative to such contribution, be it financial or by labour, is incarceration. Members are well aware that incarceration is an expensive business these days. The honourable sponsor of the bill advised us in his second-reading speech that the cost of a cell is in the order of \$100 000. That is pretty frightening. At least 2 and perhaps 2½ Housing Commission houses could be built for \$100 000. In addition, it costs \$90-odd a day to keep a prisoner inside.

Thus, we have a penalty on 1 side or a contribution on the other. The ability of courts to levy fines is in itself a contribution towards society in that those moneys go into Consolidated Revenue. When fines are paid, there is some small contribution towards the cost of bringing an offender before the courts and sentencing him. However, I would doubt that many fines would come anywhere near covering the costs of bringing the offender to court. Even large cases involving bookmakers or drug dealers may require such extensive research and investigation that the huge fines imposed would not cover the costs.

It is surprising that this proposal was not implemented by governments 20 or 30 years ago. Jails have always been expensive places in which to keep people. There have always been fine defaulters for 1 reason or another. Some do not have the money with which to pay a fine; it is as simple as that. In the past, we sent such people to jail. With this legislation, the courts and the Director of Correctional Services will have a sensible alternative. Whilst there will not be a financial contribution to Consolidated Revenue, society will benefit by a person being required to put in some hours of effort. Hopefully, systems will be developed to ensure that he does some work and does not simply lean on a rake for several hours.

Perhaps the honourable sponsor might enlighten me a little on the matter of the value of service relative to the severity of the crime. In his second-reading speech, he gave figures such as \$10, \$25, \$50 and \$100. I take the point that the figure should be flexible and be set by regulation. I think that is quite sensible. However, I think that the minister, the magistrates and the officials who will be administering this system will have to bear in mind what a person's effort is worth.

I would like to know whether the rate will be a uniform one. Would it apply to an 18 year-old youth who is unskilled and perhaps unemployed at the time of committing an offence at the same rate as it would apply to a 45-year-old lawyer who might have a very substantial income?

Mr Dondas: If he had a substantial income, he could pay the fine.

Mr PERRON: I guess that is true.

I am sure that the minister understands the principle I am trying to express. He might enlighten me on this matter when he speaks in reply. I add my support for the bill and commend it to honourable members.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I too would like to give my support for this bill which comes in 2 parts. The first part relates to remission of sentences which was dropped out of the law when the Criminal Code was implemented because it was generally thought that the prerogative of mercy was sufficient to cover such cases. However, in light of experience and some doubts about the full meaning of the prerogative of mercy in its 3 forms - a complete pardon, a pardon on condition and a reduction in sentence - it was decided it would be a good thing if it were spelt out in greater detail. That has been well covered by the minister in his second-reading speech and I will not continue with it. I do not believe anybody would have any difficulty with the decision made now, in the light of experience, that it should be included in our law in a more specific form.

The second part of the bill is extremely interesting and worth while. Like the member for Fannie Bay, I wonder why this option was not available 20 years ago. It is an option which is given to certain offenders who have not been involved in horrendous crime. Basically, it applies to people who have been fined and either cannot or do not wish to pay the fine. The latter often want to go to jail to be seen as martyrs to a particular cause, but they are not the ones this bill is about. The people we are interested in are those who cannot afford to pay the fines. They will be given an option of going to jail or applying to the Director of Correctional Services to work off their fine under the community services order scheme.

This option has many advantages. Our jails tend to be overcrowded. It costs at least \$90 a day to keep a prisoner. It keeps these people away from those jailed for criminal offences. Often, getting amongst the tough-nuts can lead to people learning lots of nasty little tricks which would encourage them to enter a life of crime. The avoidance of that would be a commendable aim. There must be safeguards for the community. People who have offended against society must be checked. The director has to vet the applications from people who seek to work under the scheme. There are built-in safeguards in the legislation. The prisoner who has been in jail and has applied for a community service order has certain rights. He also has certain obligations. The bill sets these out very clearly.

A maximum of 480 hours of community work applies. That represents twelve 40-hour weeks. If the sentence involves more than that, it seems that the offender cannot work the whole of it off through the community service order system. I am not certain about that, so I would ask the minister to clarify it. If a person is given a 20-week sentence and spends 8 weeks in jail, can he then work off the remaining 12 weeks under a community service order? I have not been able to check that out in the somewhat limited time since the bill was presented. I would commend that if the person is deemed to be suitable for service orders.

There will be obligations on a person who is subject to a community service order. These are specified in proposed sections 21D(4)(b) and 21D(5). Basically, if an offender applies for a community service order, the order must be completed under that direction. The offender may not renege. As I interpret it, if the offender is within 1 day of completing the work order and he absconds or creates a problem, he will be returned to jail and required to complete the term to which he was sentenced originally, without any consideration being given to the time that has been spent performing work under the community service order. Take the example of a person failing to pay a fine and being sentenced to 20 days jail. If he is granted a community service order in lieu of jail and performs work for only 19 days, he will be returned to jail to serve the full 20-day sentence. Credits are built up whilst a work order is being performed but, if the order is not completed in full, all credits are forfeited. I think that is fair enough. It is a privilege to be allowed to make some contribution to society under a work service order instead of being sent to jail. The responsibility on the person performing work orders has to be backed up by some firm action should he fail to obey the conditions.

I see considerable advantages in the central Australian region through this amendment, particularly for people in the communities away from Alice Springs. It costs a great deal of money to bring people into Alice Springs, and return them to their homes. I realise that it will not necessarily be easy to find the money and time to set up this community service order scheme but I believe it will be well worth the effort. I am sure that some people who have offended in relatively small ways would be far better off in their own community. It will save considerable money in many ways. I am totally in agreement with the member for Fannie Bay that the work should not be a matter of leaning on a shovel for a few hours. It must be meaningful work which makes a real contribution to society.

I look forward to the implementation of this legislation and to seeing how it works in practice. I give it my full support. It is something we should have done many years ago.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I support this legislation. For a long time I have believed that, where an offence is committed against a person, a society or a community, sending a person to jail as a punishment is losing its effect. The connection between the offence and the punishment is becoming more and more esoteric as the legal system becomes increasingly complicated.

I believe that the community service orders will make the connection between the offence and the punishment far more clear in people's eyes, not just to the person who is undergoing the punishment, but the community that needs also to have faith that the system is one that provides justice by delivering appropriate punishment to a person who has transgressed. Because the offence has been perpetrated on the community, there is also the opportunity for the offender to regain his position in society through



performing work to compensate for the wrong that he has done. I think that this legislation will enable that to occur and it will establish that link. Of course, it will have to be kept under review and we will have to ensure that the main purpose is served as we develop it further.

In the past, when there has been an opportunity to use community work as an alternative to prison, some magistrates have been keen on it and some have not. It had become something of a lottery in that it depended on the magistrate whether a fine, a community work order or a jail sentence would be imposed. I hope the enactment of this legislation will provide a clear signal to magistrates of the government's intentions, that some of those magistrates who have been loath to take this option in the past will utilise it and that the other mechanisms will ensure that that is done.

Mr Speaker, I believe it is essential that community service orders are able to be carried out either in the community where the offence occurred or else in the home community. I know that this will add to the cost of the implementation of this system but, if a person is brought in from a distant community to have his case heard in Alice Springs or Darwin, and serves a community service order in Alice Springs or Darwin, I think the whole point of the exercise will be lost. The work needs to be carried out in the community where the offence was committed. I know that some work has been done on starting this scheme in some communities in my area and I am hopeful that this will be extended at least to the various communities which are on the court circuit. Hopefully, eventually, it will be able to move from there into the smaller communities where the actual crime or offence was committed.

I commend the legislation. It is very unfortunate that there has had to be an urgency motion in respect of this legislation. I would have preferred to have had time to study it in more detail. I have only been able to work through the principles involved without actually obtaining advice from people who have a greater understanding of the issues than I. That is regretted, but I understand that the minister is very keen to get this program off the ground. As long as we approach it in the right spirit and do not regard it as being fixed for all time, hopefully all will be well. Once it is in operation, it may become clear that certain amendments may be necessary. I hope this legislation will maintain its present level of support from both sides of the Assembly and that all members will work towards finding appropriate systems of punishment so that we can reduce the horrendous crime rate that exists in the Northern Territory.

Mr DALE (Correctional Services): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions, particularly the opposition for its support in recognising the necessity for urgency given the unfortunate overcrowding that exists in our prison system at the moment. As I said in my second-reading speech, the number of prisoners at that time was 456, and it gives me no pleasure to inform honourable members that, as of midnight the night before last, there were 459. As I predicted, numbers will increase quite significantly over the next couple of months and this legislation should ease the problem to some extent.

I have been asked how many people could be released on orders immediately. I cannot answer that question in absolute numbers at the moment but, over a year, an average of 35% of the prison population is involved. I am speaking about fine defaulters and, over a year, some 644 prisoners would fit this bill. Clearly, it is quite a significant move. However, I could not give accurate numbers at this precise time.

It must be remembered by honourable members - and a couple did touch on this fact - that this legislation relates to fine defaulters and that the community service order is an option. This is the nub of the quite radical move from similar legislation in other states because the Director of Correctional Services has that option, on application by a particular fine defaulter who is in jail, to direct him to perform community service orders. Of course, the director then has that discretion. It is not, of course, seen as an option for a magistrate as such because his decision is that the person will be fined. The magistrate has listened to the circumstances surrounding the particular offence and his decision is that the person be fined and not put into an institution. It seems to me quite ridiculous that, because either that person does not have the means or the will to pay the fine, then the assessment of the magistrate in the first instance is not the end result and the person goes to jail. This legislation will provide an alternative to that person sitting in jail and costing the taxpayer some \$93 per day. At the same time, he would be wiping off \$25 per day of his fine. In round figures, that would mean \$68 per day lost to the taxpayer or to the community.

Let me assure the member for Fannie Bay that it costs exactly the same amount to keep a lawyer in jail as it does to keep a labourer. Therefore it is appropriate that, if they are out of jail, they should work off their fines at exactly the same rate. If a lawyer were released on a community service order to mow lawns, I wonder whether he would be worth more a day than the lawn mowing contractor who was in jail. In practical terms, I do not think that we can concern ourselves with the actual rate other than to say that the person would be working his fine off at \$100 per day. It is interesting to note that the legislation is a little different from that in other states. In Victoria and Tasmania, a person can work off penalties for several offences concurrently. The way it works is that, if the person were working off his penalty at a rate of \$100 per day, he would actually be working off \$300 from his total of, say, 3 fines for 3 offences. That certainly is not envisaged here.

Perhaps the \$100 a day sounds extravagant in that not too many of us can earn that. It is not extravagant when one relates it to how much the taxpayer is losing by keeping that person in prison and what pertains elsewhere in Australia in respect of community service orders. The other point to be noted is that, by giving the Director of Correctional Services the power to make the decision rather than putting the person back through the court system will result in great savings and ease the pressure on the court system.

The maximum number of hours that a person can work under a community service order is 480. If a person does not work to the satisfaction of the director, the order can be revoked. As the member for Sadadeen said, he would be back to square 1. He would be in jail wiping his fine off at \$25 a day.

Magistrates will be extremely keen to see this option in place because it has the potential to rehabilitate people. I do not know the reasons why some people refuse to pay their fines which results in their having to serve a term of imprisonment. It has always amazed me.

Mr Ede: No money.

Mr DALE: I take into account the percentage who simply do not have the money. I think I would raise the money somehow if I were faced with the prospect of having to spend a couple of days in prison for not paying a \$50 fine. Apparently, some people make that choice and, for others, it may be a point of principle. I suppose that is their right but society can no longer

afford to build institutions ad infinitum at the rate of \$100 000 per cell and keep people incarcerated at a cost of some \$93 per day.

Where people will work their community service orders and the nature of that work will be determined by the 5 regional committees that I mentioned in my second-reading speech. I am sure that they will be able to take into account all of the matters mentioned by the member for Stuart.

This is another extremely innovative piece of legislation relating to correctional services in the Northern Territory. Unlike the member for Arafura, I do not claim to be the pathfinder in all of these things. I acknowledge that many people have put a great deal of work into this and other initiatives in respect of correctional services. I congratulate them on their tenacity in getting these initiatives in place. The urgency that has been placed on this bill has certainly been supported by staff who are trying their utmost to give the best possible service to prisoners. They respect the fact that, whilst prisoners are wrongdoers in the eyes of society, they have a right to live a reasonable and comfortable existence in the correctional system. We believe that rehabilitation in the long term will keep the numbers in our prisons down. I congratulate officers of the Department of Correctional Services for the work they have done in relation to this bill and in other areas throughout the service.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Companies (Application of Laws) Amendment Bill (Serial 247) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

#### COMPANIES (APPLICATION OF LAWS) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 247)

Continued from 19 November 1986.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, this is a simple piece of legislation which will effect 2 things. It declares certain offences under section 57(2) of the Northern Territory Companies Code to be regulatory offences in terms of initiating necessary prosecutions. This removes the current necessity to prove intent in relation to those offences. The bill also removes some technical anomalies in respect of the operation of foreign companies in the Northern Territory.

The legislation is consequent on the Northern Territory's participation in the National Companies and Securities Scheme and the opposition understands the need to introduce the legislation at short notice. The scheme came into operation on 1 July this year and the Northern Territory has a statutory obligation to correct any current problems in Northern Territory law in order to comply with the scheme.

Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the suspension of standing orders and the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Law Officers Amendment Bill (Serial 230) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

#### LAW OFFICERS AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 230)

Continued from 20 November 1986.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, this is a welcome piece of legislation. The bill sets up the office of Solicitor for the Northern Territory and is consistent with the way in which the matter has been handled in the states. It does not change the legal functions of the office and, indeed, all of the major powers currently held under section 9 of the principal act are directly transferred to the new office by this legislation. The honourable minister provided me with an advance copy of the legislation which I examined carefully and discussed with some legal practitioners in Darwin. In every case, they welcomed the enactment of this legislation in the Northern Territory.

The minister has outlined very fully the detailed matters that are covered in the legislation. There is no need for me to canvass those. Suffice it to say that they are all aimed at providing a greater degree of flexibility to the operations of the Northern Territory Solicitor. It can be fairly accurately summed up by saying that it provides the Solicitor for the Northern Territory with virtually the same degree of flexibility as is exercised in a commercial solicitor's office.

As I said before, we have had an opportunity to go through the legislation carefully. It has certainly been supported by the legal practitioners I have had the opportunity to discuss it with. It is a welcome piece of legislation and the opposition fully supports it.

Motion agreed to; bill read 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.

WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 213)  
HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 214)

Continued from 28 August 1986.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I would like to make some brief comments and to indicate that the opposition intends to support these bills. We note that the purpose of the bills is to introduce specific provisions for a revised system of water billing and multiple billing for water and sewerage services.

I want to place on record my appreciation of the briefings that I have received from officers of the Department of Transport and Works in relation to this legislation. The basic purpose is to allow for 3-monthly billing instead of the current arrangement of annual billing. I understand that this will increase the amount of revenue to be received because the revenue that might otherwise have accrued to the department in 1987-88 will now be collected in this financial year. Revenue will increase from \$11.9m in 1985-86 to \$19.5m in 1986-87. Some of the increase will occur because, under the previous arrangement, the revenue would not have been collected until the following financial year. Higher charges also contribute to the increased amount.

One of my questions about this legislation concerned the extent to which water and sewerage charges in the Territory would be equivalent to those elsewhere. I appreciate the department's advice which indicates that in most cases Territory charges will be less than those which apply elsewhere. A further issue that I should place on the record was the subject of a question I asked of the minister earlier this week. It related to the liability of tenants in relation to water and sewerage charges, particularly water charges. On the basis of the briefings that I received, I am satisfied that the arrangement will remain essentially the same and that Housing Commission tenants will continue to be billed for excess water. The commission will be paying for the basic amount of 500 kL, but the usual charge by the Department of Transport and Works will be on a per kilolitre basis.

My only other comment relates to the schedule of amendments which allow for pro rata charges. The minister has circulated this and I foreshadow that the opposition will be supporting the amendments.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, the various methods of levying water charges throughout Australia have been discussed for quite some time. I am well aware that, in other places, water consumption is charged on the basis of the improved capital value of properties. That creates some distress for business houses and the like. A multi-storey building in the centre of Sydney would be carrying astronomical charges for water on the basis that it has a few toilets on each floor and maybe a water fountain in the lobby. That is fine in a socialist system where the heavier charges on highly-valued properties are used to subsidise charges to people in residential areas.

As the cost of energy increases, the cost of supplying water to communities increases also. As a government, we are under great pressure from the Grants Commission to raise a reasonable proportion of the actual cost involved. There are many components which contribute to the total cost of providing water to the consumer. It is vital to protect this valuable commodity whose importance in remote communities is often spoken of by members opposite. The best way to do that is to ensure that it is not wasted. Water

is not a replaceable commodity; it is a resource that needs to be managed carefully.

I have seen amazing levels of consumption, particularly in some of the remote areas where people have only basic facilities in their homes and there are no facilities such as parks and gardens. Remarkably, the consumption in some of those areas is 2 or 3 times greater than that which occurs in suburban areas. Those costs have to be met, and this bill is an example of a system which is based on the user-pays principle. If you wish to waste water or use it excessively then you, as an individual, will be faced with the cost of doing so.

A feature of the bill which pleases me is the facility to be able to spread costs throughout the year. It is important for the consumer to be able to budget for the various charges that he has to pay over each 12-month period and the issue of multiple accounts throughout the year will provide a significant advantage. The provision allowing for a deemed basic consumption figure of 500 kL is important not only from the Housing Commission's point of view but also to people in private industry who have leased properties. Their lease contracts are quite specific. Without the implementation of this basic charge facility, those people would be carrying the total burden.

I mentioned earlier the various costs involved in supplying water. Some of those costs are fixed. For example, regardless of the number of times people flush their toilets, they pay a standard amount for the service to cover the cost of infrastructure, headworks and so on.

In respect of water charges, the government will apply a charge that is based on total consumption and which will incorporate 2 scales. With water services, it is extremely difficult to isolate fixed-cost items from consumable items. I would like to see the minister and Cabinet monitor the effects of the new rates over a period and possibly review them to see whether it is possible to levy a basic charge to cover fixed costs and add the consumption rate to that.

Mr Speaker, with those few words, I endorse the bill. It will place the responsibility on consumers to use this most valuable commodity wisely. To that extent, perhaps we will avoid some of the high costs of additional headworks and infrastructure and relieve government of the necessity to build more dams, install more pumps and construct major pipelines in built-up areas at an astronomical cost, both financial and in terms of disruption. All this is needed to provide for a consumption rate that is way above the basic needs within each home. In relation to consumption in major metropolitan areas interstate, one would be talking of less than 1000 L per day per head of population. In many areas of the Northern Territory, particularly in some remote Aboriginal settlements, the figure is 1500 L to 2000 L. Such outlandish figures can only represent waste. I commend the bill because it will help to avoid unnecessary waste.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the history of billing for water in the Territory is an interesting one. For many years, we followed the basic system used in the southern states of having a basic charge that was levied whether the household used the allowance or not. The idea was that the cost of providing the service had to be covered. Later, an excess water charge was introduced. In my early days in Alice Springs, the rate charged for excess use was lower than that paid for use of the exact basic allowance. As time went by, this changed and a higher rate was charged for excess water because it was realised that water was a scarce and expensive commodity.

With this legislation, we will pay for what we use. There will be no basic charge. People may ask why a charge is not made for the infrastructure costs. I think the thinking on this has changed because we do not recoup anywhere near the full cost of providing the service. The situation in the Territory is different from that in Adelaide with which I am familiar. In Adelaide, the reservoirs are in the hills and extra water can be supplied to the city below without extra cost. In Darwin, water has to be pumped some 40 km and then elevated in tanks to provide pressure. That adds to the cost of supplying the water. In Alice Springs, the water has to be drawn from the Mereenie Basin several hundred feet below the ground and then pumped into town.

I can understand the thinking that it is better to charge for actual usage in order to encourage people to be a little more frugal with water. The pumping costs, of course, relate to the cost of electricity. Electricity costs have risen, particularly with the loss of certain subsidies.

As a result of this legislation, the consumer will pay for water in 4 quarterly instalments. I think that will be very acceptable to the community. From my own experience, I know it is difficult when one is suddenly hit with a great pile of bills all at once. If I sometimes find that a bit rough, I am sure many people who are on much lower salaries would find it even more difficult. It is hard to budget and save. If you have a few dollars, there is the temptation to spend them. I am sure many people will find this a far more satisfactory manner of handling their financial affairs.

It was intended originally that all Housing Commission tenants would pay for all the water that they actually used. There have been complications there, not only with the Housing Commission but also with private contracts for dwellings. Contracts provide that the basic water charge will be paid by the owner of the building and any excess will be paid for by the tenant. In this respect, a basic allowance of 500 kL is retained. As far as the Housing Commission is concerned, the basic water charge is collected in the rent. To avoid confusion, the decision has been taken to leave the situation in respect of Housing Commission dwellings basically as it was before.

Mr Speaker, I believe that this legislation will be welcomed by the public, particularly the concept of quarterly payments. Nobody will be pleased that the cost of water is increasing, but we must be realistic. We still pay less than the basic charges and cost of water in the states, and we must be grateful for that. Nobody likes increases in charges, but the hard cold facts have to be realised and accepted. I believe the government has acted responsibly by the introduction of this legislation.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, someone in the Department of Transport and Works has a sense of humour. I have a copy of a document given to me by 1 of my colleagues which contains some proposed changes to the water and sewerage rates. I do not want to read that out, but my eyes were caught by a section at the bottom, which says: 'Anomalies section 2. Owners of units with 1 toilet have the cheapest form of personal relief'.

Mr Dondas: You like that?

Mr SMITH: Yes, I like that. The person who wrote that has my congratulations.

Of course, that has been 1 of the problems with the proposals as they have stood so far: the owners of flats that have 2 toilets would pay more. I

understand that the minister intends to announce some changes in the proposals to correct that anomaly, and I congratulate him for it. In my view, there is no good reason why people who own flats that have 2 toilets should be required to pay \$87 more than the owners of houses that have 2 toilets. I am glad that that is to be corrected. I am also pleased that the government has come to grips with the 500 kL basic allowance for people in Housing Commission residences and other places where contracts have been agreed to. I know that was a matter of some concern to Housing Commission tenants and it is good that that has been picked up.

Mr Speaker, I must admit to some concern about quarterly accounts. On occasion, I am approached by constituents who have received an electricity bill and a Telecom bill in the 1 pay period, and they find it incredibly difficult to put together the money to pay both bills in the short period allowed. I think the normal time given for payment is about 14 days. For most people, that covers only 1 pay period. When it is looking at quarterly accounting, I hope that some consideration can be given by the government to the possibility of coming to an arrangement with Telecom whereby accounts could be sent out in different areas at different times so that people would not receive a water bill, an electricity bill and a Telecom bill in the same week or even in the same month. Surely that is not beyond the wit of government even though 2 governments are involved in this case. I hope that that will be possible. It is an important matter for people on low incomes who become quite frightened when faced with the prospect of paying these bills.

Mr Speaker, I have no figures indicating what average bills will be but, if the government intends to send out water bills and electricity bills together for each quarter, it may well have to give consideration to lengthening the time for payment for 1 or the other of those bills. Again, it will impose quite a massive burden. The average householder probable pays \$250 a year or \$60 a quarter for electricity now and, on top of that, the average water bill is about \$200 a year or \$50 a quarter. People would be looking at finding \$100 or more from 1 pay packet if the 2 bills were sent out together. It is a logical extension that, if the same meter reader is to read the electricity and water charges, the 2 accounts will be sent out together, and that will be a problem, not necessarily for us because we are fairly well off, but certainly for many of the people whom we represent.

I hope that the minister will ask his departments to address that particular matter and either extend the period allowed for payment or arrive at some other solution to the matter. I would commend to the attention of the minister the opportunity that NTEC currently provides for people to pay their bills in advance in weekly or fortnightly instalments. I know that NTEC has advocated this scheme quite vigorously but many people do not know all that much about it. However, it is a good scheme and I know many of my constituents have taken advantage of it.

Mr Dondas: I agree with that. It is the next item on the agenda.

Mr SMITH: Yes I know. I was waiting to be pulled up here, but I thought that I might get away with it.

NTEC has a procedure whereby people can pay in advance for a quarter at a fortnightly rate. It is an excellent scheme and perhaps the minister who will have responsibility for collection of payments for electricity and water could look at implementing a similar system to cover those areas.



Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that there have been a few teething problems with this particular matter. It is always the case that the little things are the most important because they affect the general public most. I am glad that the government has taken the time to listen to people talking about the problems they perceive or experience. I think that, as a result, we have a good piece of legislation which will upset as few people as possible.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I want to speak in this debate mainly because of a couple of comments made by the honourable member for Wagaman who stated that this legislation will be very effective because it will stop all those terrible people on remote communities from wasting water. The first point I would make is that section 10 of the Water Supply and Sewerage Act relates to sewerage districts and water districts. As most of the remote areas are not declared water districts, they will not be covered by this legislation, at least not at this stage.

The honourable member used a figure, which he called a 'figure of consumption' which, he said, indicated wastage. If the member visited the communities with anything like the regularity that I do, he would know that, in the vast majority of situations, water is not wasted at the point of personal consumption. The wastage occurs as a result of poor maintenance of sewerage lines which lie beyond where a water meter would be placed if there were one.

For that reason, I am opposed strongly to any move to introduce charges on a community basis rather than on an individual basis. It is fair enough if people have to pay for their own waste, but I have no intention of supporting a proposal which takes the total consumption of a community and averages it out among individual members of the community, a system discussed previously in relation to electricity. I have no intention of supporting that. I say that in case the member for Wagaman was flying a kite for the government and there was an intention to bring that in a bit later on.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I thank all honourable members for their contributions this afternoon. Normally one would cover the remarks made by members point by point. The Leader of the Opposition said that he is happy with the proposed amendments contained in this legislation. The member for MacDonnell had a lunchtime briefing to bring him up to date with the intentions of proposed amendments. I have prepared my speech to close the second-reading debate because I believe it is important to summarise the issues clearly in the interests of the many members of the public who want to know what is happening. I will try to cover all the points which have been raised in correspondence with unit owners and strata title owners. Although there are no exemptions in this legislation, we will be examining that matter further in respect of organisations such as the Old Timers, the Salvation Army and schools. My comments will put on the record my intention to take further action on some of the concerns that have been expressed about this legislation.

The purpose of the amendments is to introduce into the Water Supply and Sewerage Act provisions for a revised system of water billing and the introduction of multiple billing for water and sewerage services. For a number of years, water charges in the Territory have been formulated around a basic allowance with a set minimum charge and an additional charge levied for consumption above that basic amount. That system does not encourage consumers to manage their use of water carefully. Water charges will now be based on actual consumption with no fixed-cost basic charge and allowance. The existing legislation was framed around the concept of a basic charge and does

not allow for any significantly different approach. To implement the new water tariffs and provide greater flexibility in formulating future tariff changes, the bill amends the Water Supply and Sewerage Act to remove the constraint of mandatory inclusion of the basic water charge.

We recognise that these new arrangements may have caused problems for landlords and tenants who had existing contracts concerning the division of liability for water charges based on the basic allowance and excess system of charging. The bill specifies that the owner is ultimately responsible for the charges, but allows arrangements which have been legally entered into to continue; that is, it deems the basic allowance that landlords would be responsible for. For example, this will enable the Housing Commission to collect charges from tenants for usage in excess of 500 kL. Similarly, private tenants who currently have an agreement with their landlords to pay for usage in excess of 500 kL will continue to have that amount deemed as their liability. Thus, the status quo of tenancy agreements will be maintained.

The bill also provides for the introduction of quarterly billing for water and sewerage services which previously have been charged for on an annual basis. The facility to spread annual water and sewerage charges over more than 1 account will result in a more equitable distribution of charges throughout the year for the consumer's budget and a more even cash flow for the government.

I pick up the point made by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the quarterly accounts, but I would remind him that NTEC has the capacity to vary its accounts, as it is doing now. There may not be the impost of 2 Territory government accounts, plus maybe a Telecom account or even a motor vehicle registration account coming together in a single week.

I would like to announce that the government has reviewed certain aspects of the decision it took earlier this year to increase sewerage charges and to cease all exemptions except for churches and church schools. Cabinet decided in June that sewerage charges would increase from \$150 to \$200 for the initial 2 toilets and from \$75 to \$150 for each additional toilet. Subsequently, we discovered that these new rates inadvertently caused an anomaly in that owners of strata title units would be paying more than the owner of a house because bills are issued to corporate bodies rather than to the individual unit holders. Last week, Cabinet decided that strata title units are to be charged as a separate ownership rather than a corporate body. Units with 2 or more toilets will now be charged on the same basis as an equivalent house. Strata title units with only 1 toilet will be given a slight advantage in 1986-87 as the charge will be \$135. This charge will increase to parity with an equivalent house in 1987-88. I might pause to add that these units are charged \$75 at the moment. To raise that to \$200 in 1 hit would be a bit steep. Therefore, the government has decided to do it in 2 bites: from \$75 to \$135 in the first year and then to the full charge in the following year.

The second issue we looked at was the level of charges for sewerage. In making our decision in June paramount in our minds were: the overall financial situation that the Territory found itself in due to Commonwealth funding cutbacks; the fact that, as a consequence, we were unable continue to provide highly-subsidised services; and continued pressure from the Commonwealth Grants Commission to move to a position of cost recovery for the service provided. On reflection, we now feel that we may have been moving to that position too quickly. We are mindful of the tightening financial situation in which the average household finds itself at this time.

While retaining its ultimate intention to cover the cost of providing the service, the government will try to ease the burden as much as possible. Sewerage charges will now be \$200 for the first 2 toilets, as we decided in June. Houses with 3 toilets will pay an extra \$75 for the third toilet. There will be a charge of \$135 for each extra toilet, with the exception of those 3-toilet houses. This reduction will also ease the burden of the increases on large establishments such as hotels and motels. They have been subsidised in the past and we will gradually move to a position whereby the commercial sector meets a more equitable share of the total cost.

The third issue was the question of exemptions. We have decided that a blanket ban on exemptions except for churches and church schools was too restrictive. I am in the process of reviewing various categories for potential exemption and I will put proposals to Cabinet as soon as possible. The Department of Transport and Works assures me that, even though accounts have been issued for the first quarter of this year based on the government's original decision, appropriate arrangements can be made for necessary adjustments to subsequent accounts in cases where it is thought appropriate to grant an exemption. No one will need to pay more than they should this financial year.

In conclusion, I will reiterate the new water rates and sewerage charges. The water charge is 0.25¢ per kilolitre for the first 1000 kL and 0.30¢ per kilolitre for subsequent usage. There will be no charge for unmetered blocks. A deemed basic allowance remains where this is contained in existing tenancy agreements. The sewerage charge will be \$200 for up to 2 toilets, with a 3-toilet house paying \$275. \$135 will be charged for extra toilets. Strata title units will be charged as separate units. Those with 2 or more toilets will be charged on the same basis as a house. Those with 1 toilet will be charged \$135 in 1986-87 and the same as a house in 1987-88.

Mr Speaker, I am hopeful that all members of the Assembly and all consumers will appreciate the need for charges to be increased and that the government is doing what it can to keep charges equitable and within the financial capacity of consumers.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

In committee:

Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment Bill (Serial 213):

Clauses 1 to 13 agreed to.

Clause 14.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 102.1.

This removes the current facility whereby the owner may elect for the tenant to pay some or all of the charges.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 15 to 18 agreed to.

Clause 19:

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 102.2.

This removes the definition of the now obsolete 'water allowance', enables multiple sewerage billing, gives effect to a Cabinet decision which defines the effective annual period and simplifies existing regulations to enable the issue of accounts to the owner at his last known official postal address under the Real Property Act and also gives effect to the definition of 'owner'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 19, as amended to, agreed to.

Remainder of bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Housing Amendment Bill (Serial 214):

Bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bills passed remaining stages without debate.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment Bill (Serial 250) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

#### WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 250)

Continued from 25 November 1986.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to record the fact that the opposition supports this bill. We are aware that it is related to the amendment to the Electricity Commission Act. Essentially, its purpose is to reduce the duplication of meter reading, billing and other services currently carried out both by the Electricity Commission and by the Water Division. We accept the government's view that the agency arrangements are necessary. The amendment is necessary to empower the minister to enter into such agency agreements for the sake of preventing this duplication of services.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, it is rather difficult to speak to this bill without commenting also on the related bill. Nobody could argue with the intent of this bill in that it represents another attempt to streamline the administration of water, sewerage and electricity charges. In addressing this legislation, the honourable minister has not mentioned whether there will be any reduction in the number of public servants employed to administer these functions, in the interests of rationalisation, or whether their numbers will increase.

Mr Speaker, a strong lobby is putting forward the view that there should be a single water authority to cover all aspects of water interests including natural investigation, research on all forms of water use, public utilisation, reticulation to the public and acceptance of payments from the public for the services. Another group of people takes the opposite view and, judging by this legislation, that is the view that has prevailed. This view is that

natural resources such as minerals, water etc should be grouped together from the point of view of administration and research whereas the utilisation of these resources by the community should be considered together, as they are in this piece of legislation and a bill that is to follow.

Neither this legislation nor the Electricity Commission Bill will apply to all people in my electorate. Whilst most of my constituents have electricity reticulated to their residences, not everybody receives reticulated water and very few are linked to the sewerage system. Nobody could argue with the intent of this piece of legislation to enable a single meter reader to ascertain consumption from electricity and water meters in 1 visit. That makes sound commercial sense and it shows common sense too, if only for the reason that only 1 meter reader may be bitten instead of 2. By the way, I would be very happy to put my services forward in telling meter readers how to avoid being bitten. There are some steps they can take to protect themselves from dogs and I would be happy to provide that information to them.

This calls to mind an incident that occurred in the rural area about 7 years ago. It provides a contrast between the situation then and the situation now when 1 meter reader will read 2 meters, each relating to a separate service. In those days, the meter reader travelled by car in the rural area but he was always accompanied by another chap. When I commented on this fact to the relevant authority, I was told that 1 meter reader was always training another meter reader because the life a meter reader was not very long in the rural area.

Mr Speaker, 2 meter readers came to our place 1 day. Our meter box is situated by the bore up by the road. I saw these 2 people come down to the house. They went over to the shed and poked around in there. I insist on my privacy, especially when public servants are around on our property, so I went over and spoke to them very politely. I asked them what they were doing there and the supposedly-experienced one told me that they were looking for the meter. I explained, very politely, that the meter was not there, and that they had passed it on their way in. The experienced meter reader and the trainee explained at length that they had been at a loss to find the meter. They apologised and all the rest of it. I am sure they had no ulterior motives in poking about in the shed. However, those days are gone now, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, in the interests of economy, restraint and common sense, I am very pleased that this legislation has been introduced.

Motion agreed; bill read a second time.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

WORK HEALTH BILL  
(Serial 232)

Continued from 18 November 1986.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 3, agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.1 which is the first of 48 hopefully successful amendments. Certainly, they are sensible. This amendment would remove from clause 4(5) the word 'materially'. The clause says:

An injury shall be deemed to arise out of or in the course of a worker's employment where it occurred by way of a gradual process over a period of time and the nature of the employment in which he was employed at any time during that period materially contributed to the injury.

Mr Chairman, the inclusion of the word 'materially' makes the onus of proof on the worker much more difficult. It is harder on the employee because all sorts of things can be said to have contributed to a condition but, according to this, work must be the major factor. In our view, that poses some problems. It does not impose problems for the obvious workers' compensation case, where a person falls off a ladder and breaks his neck, or perhaps develops RSI. I think it can be demonstrated that an RSI injury can occur as a direct result of working for 8 hours a day at a keyboard.

But there are other problems that will make it much more difficult for an employee to gain success with the word 'materially' there. How does a person who is claiming workers' compensation because of a heart condition prove that his job contributed materially to it? It would be simpler for the worker to prove that his job contributed to the onset of his heart condition but a much more difficult and, I would say, unreasonable task for him to have to demonstrate that the job materially contributed to his condition.

Of course, stress-related illnesses fall into the same category and there is the question of the increasing occurrence of cancers in our community. There have been cases where it has been demonstrated quite clearly that cancers have occurred, to some degree at least, as a result of the work environment in which a person had been placed. In a quite recent case, a woman was able to sue successfully against her employer because, over a long period of time, she worked in a room with 7 fellow employees who were smokers. She developed lung cancer, and she was able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the court that her work situation had contributed to the development of that condition.

Mr Chairman, the point I make is that the word 'materially' in that clause makes it much more difficult for an employee to gain satisfaction when he develops 1 of those less obvious, fringe-like illnesses, problems or diseases that people are subject to. The point of this amendment is to make it easier for the employee to demonstrate that his work has contributed to an illness which has been sufficient to put him off work and, surely, that is the basic test. If a worker is in such a bad way that he cannot go to work, and no physical trauma has occurred over the weekend - he has not broken his leg in a football match or fallen off his surfboard or something like that - surely the presumption has to be that that illness has been contributed to by the place where he spends most of his waking hours.

I would like to hear any argument against that because I think that it is a valid argument. This bill does not accept that. It places a higher onus of proof on the employee. We say that that is unreasonable and are seeking the omission of the word 'materially' from the clause.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I thought we might hear some rational argument on this particular clause, but the first amendment proposed by the opposition would seem to indicate that we are moving into a long and arduous debate this evening if it is an example of how the opposition means to continue. I will take the amendment head on, and try to put this very clearly.

Injuries arising out of or due to the course of a person's employment are compensated for through this legislation, as they have been under workers' compensation legislation in the past. The fundamental principle is that the injury, disability or illness should arise from the course of employment. It is true that, in certain jobs, a heart condition or a stress-related illness can arise from the work. A cancer can result from a work environment. The crux of the argument the Leader of the Opposition put was that, if somebody is off work for something other than a very obvious circumstance, such as having broken a leg playing football, the prima facie assumption must be that the condition was a consequence of the working environment.

A person spends 35 hours a week at work out of a total of 168 hours. It is wrong to presume automatically that the injury was caused by work unless it can be proved otherwise. The onus should be on demonstrating that it was caused by the work environment. We are not talking about social security, national sickness legislation or national health legislation. We are talking about compensating people for injuries arising out of their work. It is totally reasonable that the work place should have materially contributed to the injury. The onus should not be on the employer to prove that work had absolutely nothing to do with it. That is the problem with the attitude that will be adopted by the opposition in respect of many of these amendments. This legislation is geared to compensate for injuries or illnesses arising out of the course of work. It is not an excuse to have some national social security system put in place.

We oppose this amendment. This is substantially a watered-down provision from the existing legislation. Under the current legislation, it is not a question of material contribution; the employee has to prove that the injury was caused by the work. We argue that, except in the most obvious examples, it would be virtually impossible to prove that it was not work related. That would increase the compensation load and drive industry bankrupt.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the Chief Minister is painting a very black and white case. He is saying that either it is this or it is that. Obviously, the argument arises where it is not obvious that the accident was caused by work. That is why this is a fundamental clause. It is necessary to establish what the legislation is about. We believe that workers' compensation legislation is there for the benefit of the workers. Between the 2 extremes of where it is obvious that disability was caused by work or it is obvious that it was not, a person should be able to demonstrate that his work contributed to his illness or injury. We believe that is a perfectly reasonable point to start from in the deliberations on this legislation. It will be extremely disappointing if the Chief Minister pursues this line throughout the debate. If he does that, he will carve away at the rights of workers and we will end up with lower and lower levels of benefits and ability to claim.

Mr FIRMIN: Mr Chairman, I would just like to take up the previous speaker's suggestion that we will carve away at workers' benefits.

Mr Smith: It has already been done.

Mr FIRMIN: I disagree entirely. Perhaps members of the opposition should read the deeming provisions in clause 5 again. An injury will be deemed to arise out of the course of a worker's employment where it occurred by way of a gradual process over a period of time and the nature of employment in which he was employed at any time during that period materially contributed to the injury. In the past, that never used to happen. Workers used to have to fight for rights where there were thin lines being trodden in respect of injuries that were not clear cut. We are deeming the injury to have arisen out of the course of the employment if it can be clearly shown that the work could have materially contributed to it.

Since we are talking about the philosophy of the legislation, I would like to read something from the Chairman of the New South Wales Law Reform Commission, Professor Ronald Sackville. I think the analysis that we place on the Work Health Act sits very well with his words:

In the final analysis, everybody pays for benefits provided to anyone for anything. Whether the benefits are wages and salaries, supporting benefits, old-age pensions or the dole, the community pays for them through prices or taxes. Workers' compensation benefits are no exception. Consequently, the community as a whole has the right and the responsibility to determine how much it can afford to pay and the decision is one for employees, employers and governments according to the economy of the day.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I reiterate that we oppose this amendment. We maintain the view that this 'materially contributed' is a significant improvement in the onus of proof position for the employee. To go beyond that would be to create a situation where, potentially, it would be almost impossible for the employer to defend himself against an action.

Amendment negated.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 9 agreed to.

Clause 10:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.2.

The effect of this amendment is to give the Work Health Authority the ability to go into a work place where it thinks it is desirable in connection with the performance of any other of its functions. At present, the Work Health Authority can go into a work place to carry out investigations only where the minister so directs or it considers that an incident has occurred.

Our point is that, as 1 of its 3 prime functions, the Work Health Authority should have a concern for occupational health and safety. Yet this clause is saying that it cannot properly exercise that function without a direction from the minister or until an incident has occurred in the work place. I would have thought that, in a situation where occupational health and safety was a major concern, the authority should have the power to go into a work place on its own behalf and its own authority.

Obviously, the government will appoint a group of competent people to the Work Health Authority. It will give them precise instructions on handling employer-employee relationships. It will tell the authority, as we would tell



it, not to interfere unnecessarily in the activities of employers, because they have to earn a living. We accept that and we support it. But if we are serious about occupational health and safety we have to allow the authority the opportunity, when it considers it appropriate and has sufficient concern, to go to a work place of its own volition before an incident occurs. It is too cumbersome to force it to go to the minister before it does that. It is bureaucratic and ridiculous. I will give an example. If there is a rash of fingers going down sausage-making machines, the Work Health Authority may decide that it is appropriate to investigate sausage-making machines throughout the Northern Territory. In that situation, why on earth should it have to go to the minister first? Surely, it is a logical part of the authority's role to act on its own initiative in such matters. We have given it an act to work under. We are going to trust it to do the job. We are going to trust it not to interfere unnecessarily in what happens in the work place.

The authority will have an overwhelming concern for occupational health and safety. It needs the power to go into a work place before an incident occurs with the prospect of preventing injury and additional drain on the funding of the work health system. This seems to be a logical and positive way in which the functions of the Work Health Authority could be improved.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, this clause reflects the general trend maintained throughout this legislation. It emphasises regulation and minimises the general inspectorial role of the Work Health Authority. The intent is not to have a raft of inspectors moving from company to company, day in, day out, inspecting businesses left, right and centre.

Mr Smith: Come on, not even you believe that.

Mr HATTON: The intent of this legislation is to promote general self-regulation. As members will be aware, there is specific provision within this legislation for an overriding duty of care, and there are penalties for breaches of statutory responsibilities. There are already opportunities for inspectorial functions under other legislation relating to safety. We do not intend the authority to spend its time driving industry crazy and blowing out the cost of government with another multitude of inspectors running around every street of every town. The performance of inspectorial roles is not straightforward. The legislation contains other references concerning investigations and follow-ups which can occur under the conditions and circumstances approved by the minister who, in the end, is responsible.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, that is absolutely ridiculous. We copped this self-regulation argument from the Minister for Mines and Energy before he went swanning about overseas and now we are copping it from the Chief Minister. The government should realise that one of the most important foundations of self-regulation is a very simple motto: prevention is better than cure.

That is what we are talking about: prevention is better than cure. We are trying to ensure that that happens under this legislation. We do not need statistics which tell us that we caught up with people after an incident occurred. We want to make sure incidents do not happen. That is why we want to give this authority the ability, where it has some reason to believe that there is some danger, to talk to the bosses beforehand and to ask them to change the situation without having to go through the rigmarole of chasing the minister to obtain his approval. It is pretty obvious that, if the minister is at Cobourg or away in Paris, there will be a problem. Something may need to be done in a matter of hours. It may not be something that can wait until next week or even tomorrow.

It is absolutely essential that this amendment be passed, because it will achieve 2 things. First, it will signal to employers that the authority will take an active part in promoting work health and ensuring that dangerous practices are eliminated. Secondly, it will allow the authority to do this without having to go to the minister for permission. It is clear that, if there is an obvious and immediate danger in a work place or a particular type of industry, it is necessary that other businesses in the same type of industry need to be checked. This bureaucratic nonsense of having to go to the minister is absolutely ridiculous. I call on the government to think again because, as I said, prevention is better than cure.

Mr FIRMIN: Mr Chairman, the member really does not do himself any service in terms of his understanding of the functions of the authority. He wants this paragraph inserted in order to look after the workers before any injury occurs. He should read the functions under clause 10 in their entirety. The functions of the authority include:

to develop, publish and recommend occupational health and safety standards in the Northern Territory; to enforce, in accordance with this act, compliance with occupational health and safety standards for the Territory; to encourage employers and workers to consult with each other about safe work practices in the work place; and to identify priorities and needs in occupational health and safety in the Territory.

It does not require additional inspectorial functions because it goes on to say that those functions can be coordinated by the authority with respect to those inspectorial functions that already take place through other departmental authorities. There is no requirement for that.

The member for Stuart mentioned an individual worker having a problem with something that may or may not occur. He ought to read clause 32 relating to immediate threat.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I did not intend to speak on this matter but I could not help but rise to my feet in response to the member for Stuart's rantings. He ridiculed self-regulation and advocated prevention. His idea of prevention is to involve a team of bureaucrats. His thinking is in line with the time of Charles Dickens. He believes that the factory floor has not changed since those days.

An example of self-regulation is the motorist who knows the speed limit and the traffic rules and applies them in his driving techniques whereas prevention, in the honourable member's terms, is the Red Flag Act of the 19th century. I do not know how one can describe the backward thinking of the member for Stuart and his twisted concept of how business operates.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I will ignore the outburst from the Minister for Education and simply point out to the member for Ludmilla that he does not know the difference between a power and a function. The point is that the authority has a function to carry out but what we are talking about is the power to carry out that particular function. The function is there but the restriction is on the power and we are asking for the restriction to be taken off the power so that the authority can carry out that function.

Mr SMITH: The member for Ludmilla quoted: 'to enforce, in accordance with this act, compliance with occupational health and safety standards for the Territory'. That is a commendable function but what happens is that that

is limited by the inability of the Work Health Authority to enter a work place to ensure that there is compliance with occupational health and safety standards before an incident occurs. There is not much point in being able to enter a work place after an incident has occurred because it is obvious then that there has been no compliance. If there had been compliance, 99 times out of 100 there would not have been an injury. We have a clause that says that the function of the Work Health Authority is to enforce compliance with occupational health and safety standards yet we are not allowing it to carry out that task because we will not let it enter the places where people work. That is ridiculous.

Our amendment proposes that it be let in where the people work so that it can carry out its functions. It is as simple as that. It will not set up any bureaucratic system. The authority should have the power to carry out that function listed in clause 10(c) to enforce compliance with occupational health and safety standards. If you do not give it that power, you are saying that you do not mind that unsafe occupational health and safety conditions exist just so long as no one is injured. As soon as someone is injured and becomes a cost on the premium payers, the employers, then it will take some action. We are suggesting that the Work Health Authority should have the ability to enforce the occupational health and safety codes of practice that have been accepted by the minister. I cannot see any logical argument against that.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, in listening to this debate, I am not sure that it will end until someone moves something pretty heavy. Clearly, there is disagreement as to whether or not the power is there already. The member for Stuart made great play about the difference between a power and a function. The powers of the authority are spelt out. Under clause 11, the authority has 'such powers as are necessary to enable it to perform its functions or as are conferred on it by this or any other act'.

Mr Ede: And it is restricted by the clause.

Mr PERRON: If we look back at clause 10(b) and (c), we see that the authority can develop standards and enforce standards. It has the power to do whatever it needs to do to enforce this legislation. Honourable members opposite cannot understand what is before them although it is really quite clear. The authority has the power to enforce its standards which it is able to 'develop, publish and recommend'.

Mr LEO: I come from one of the largest industrial communities in the Northern Territory and this legislation will certainly have some meaning in my community. One of the principal things that we were hoping to achieve from this legislation was an independent authority that would be charged with the obligation of pursuing safe work practices and that, if it was unsuccessful in that pursuit, compensation would be paid to persons who were injured.

The predicament with clause 10(h) leads to a number of objections further down the line. If the minister is to be involved to the extent that he will personally direct investigations into work places, I can assure him that he will be involved indirectly in 80% of the stoppages at the bauxite processing plant on the Gove Peninsula. Rationality would dictate that the minister should be removed from the process. Rationality would indicate, even to this Chief Minister, that he should not be involved in that process and that the Work Health Authority is the appropriate body to initiate investigations into whether or not safe work practices are being carried out in the work place.

If the Chief Minister can tell me that the authority can investigate potentially hazardous working conditions without the minister's approval, that is fine. If he cannot, like it or not, inevitably he will become involved with 80% of the industrial disputes at the bauxite and alumina production plant on the Gove Peninsula. If you do not instigate investigation into those disputes ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member will address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr LEO: I am sorry. I did not hear your interjection, Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member is totally out of order. I drew the member's attention to the fact that he was addressing his remarks directly across the Chamber. I ask him to desist and address his comments through the Chair.

Mr LEO: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I do take your point.

I will ask the minister once again to tell this committee whether or not the authority has any power to inspect a work place for safe practices. This is a very important matter for my constituents. If it has those powers, where are they vested? If the Work Health Authority does not have those powers, then the minister should be aware that he will play a part in many disputes.

Mr PALMER: Mr Chairman, the opposition's powers of comprehension are not very great. It is quite normal for a minister to delegate his authority. It is quite obvious that, if a situation arose where the minister thought it proper to delegate his power to the authority in terms of clause 10(h), he would do so.

I would also draw the opposition's attention to clause 36 under the heading 'Functions and Powers of Officers'. It reads:

(1) An officer shall perform such functions and may exercise such powers as are imposed or conferred on him by or under this or any other act or delegated to him by the authority.

(2) An officer may, for the purposes of performing a function or exercising a power referred to in subsection (1), seek, whenever necessary, the assistance of any person and where the function or power requires the entry of the officer to a work place the occupier of or employer at the work place shall also permit that person access to the work place.

I can see no reason why the opposition's amendment should be agreed to or why it is necessary.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the member for Leanyer seems to be implying that the minister can delegate his power of delegation. That would be rather an unusual state of affairs.

We have heard the Chief Minister state that he will not accept our amendment because he does not believe that the authority should be able to investigate without the minister's approval. We then heard the member for Fannie Bay say the authority can actually do that as it presently stands. It is obvious that the frontbench and the backbench have not got their acts together. There is no disagreement on this side of the Assembly. The

disagreement is on the government's side. If its members cannot get their act together and agree amongst themselves as to what the bill means, I think it is probably time that we reported progress to enable them to sort themselves out.

Mr LEO: Before the passage of this particular clause is completed, I would ask the Chief Minister to direct himself to the matters which I raised. Does he appreciate that he will be involved in industrial disputation? If he appreciates that and accepts it, that is his prerogative. I think it is most foolhardy and stupid, but that is up to him.

I am not convinced by anything that the member for Leanyer said because it was absolute nonsense. Of course the minister can delegate his authority, but that still means that he has ultimate responsibility for whatever his delegate does. My point is that the people who assess whether or not an investigation should be carried out in the work place, and in what circumstances, should be completely independent of any perceived political interference.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, it has been an interesting debate. What the opposition is saying is that we should delete the reference to the responsibility of the minister.

Mr Smith: No, that is not the point.

Mr HATTON: The member for Nhulunbuy has said that, if we do not amend this clause, somehow the minister will be tied up in at least 80% of the disputes at Nabalco. I assume he means 80% of the safety-related disputes.

Mr Leo: You know that 80% of the disputes are about safety.

Mr HATTON: Yes, I do as a matter of fact. However, I make the point that we have not repealed any of the other legislation that governs the work place at Gove.

Mr Leo: No, and it is most inadequate.

Mr HATTON: There are a couple of other points I want to make. First, the points made by the member for Fannie Bay were quite relevant and instructive. There are generalised powers under clause 11 of the bill.

For the benefit of the member for Nhulunbuy, whether we like it or not, as ministers we are responsible for the actions of every public servant in the departmental areas of our administrative responsibility. That is the principle of responsible government. The opposition has emphasised that point on many occasions in this Assembly. Whether this legislation requires that a proposed course of action must be approved by the minister or not, the minister remains ultimately responsible for the actions of the authority and the workings of the legislation. I am advised that, under subclause (h), the minister may give general directions if necessary. It is possible to give generalised directions to the authority in the exercise of its functions. That is my advice from the government's legal officers and I am quite prepared to accept their interpretation. The possibility for issuing generalised delegation is there. In addition, clause 11 underwrites the power.

There are a multitude of pieces of legislation which require ministers to follow specific courses of action. This is often achieved through delegations or generalised directions which is the normal process of carrying out administration. In this bill, we have chosen to provide the minister with the

specific legislative base to limit, extend or determine the nature of investigations which may be carried out in work places. That can be as broad as the minister chooses or as narrow as the minister chooses. In the end, the minister is responsible to the community. I urge that this clause stand as printed.

Mr SMITH: That was as fine a piece of parliamentary and legislative theory as I have heard in a long time and I congratulate the Chief minister. Unfortunately, it has very little to do with what we are talking about here. We are not discussing a legislative principle. We accept what clause 13 says: 'The authority, in the exercise of its powers and the performance of its functions, is subject to the directions of the minister'. We have no problem with that and we accept it. As the Chief Minister fairly said, we have argued consistently for ministerial responsibility in government departments and authorities and, of course, this is one of those.

But that takes me back to where I started. Subclause 10(c) gives a power to the authority and then limits severely its ability to exercise that power by allowing it to enter work places only on the minister's direction or after an incident occurs.

Mr Perron: Look at clause 11.

Mr SMITH: The honourable member for Fannie Bay tells me to look at clause 11. I will read it:

The authority has such powers as are necessary to enable it to perform its functions or as are conferred on it by or under this or any other act.

I am not sure what that means precisely, but I would be prepared to wager some money that it does not mean, in any imaginable circumstance, that the Work Health Authority, without the minister's permission, or before an incident has occurred in a work place, can go into a work place to conduct an investigation. I will bet that that is not the effect of clause 11 at all, Mr Chairman.

The Work Health Authority has been given a job to do and a series of functions to carry out. We say that its ability to enforce occupational health and safety standards in the Northern Territory will be severely curtailed because it will be unable to enter into a work place to carry out an investigation without the permission of the minister. The major aim of this legislation is to try to prevent accidents and to lower the cost of the work health scheme. Allowing the authority to enter a work place before an incident occurs would be an extremely good way of developing a more effective occupational health and safety system.

I find it difficult to understand why the government is not prepared to do this. I think I have demonstrated that, given this power, the authority would have a very effective way of policing occupational health and safety more efficiently. It is all very well to talk about self-regulation. Without being overly dramatic, that is a system that pertained in the 19th century, when kids of 9 or 10 years of age were working down coal mines. That no longer happens because legislation is now in place preventing children from legally working in any capacity until they are 14 or 15 years old.

Restrictions have been placed on employers. Some of these may not be necessary in respect of some employers but, over the years, it has been

demonstrated that most employers are not too good at self-regulation. Employers need guidance and, on occasion, legislation enacted by parliaments like ours, to tell them exactly how they should treat their workers and to put minimum standards of occupational health and safety in place. What we are talking about is the development of minimum standards of occupational health and safety for the protection of workers. Once those are in place, we turn to the ability of the Work Health Authority to enforce those minimum standards. By denying the Work Health Authority access to work places - to factories, shops and other sorts of businesses - to conduct investigations where it thinks something may be wrong with health and safety standards, the government denies it a very important tool with which to ensure that occupational health and safety will be enforced in the Northern Territory.

I accept that not all areas, particularly some of the high-risk areas, are covered by this legislation, and that is one of its weaknesses. Many of the high-risk areas such as the mining and the building industries are covered under their own acts. Every worker who is not covered by specific provisions relating to the nature of his employment, for example in the Construction Safety Act, is covered by this bill. But this legislation indicates that people cannot ring up the Work Health Authority and ask it to inspect their work place because they think it is unsafe. If the Work Health Authority receives a direct request of that kind, it has to seek the minister's permission to undertake investigation. That is really strange.

I will give an example that occurred under another piece of legislation. At the time when a workman died on the Elizabeth River Bridge, it was revealed that the union had no power to examine safety conditions on that bridge until an incident had occurred. We had the strange situation of the minister ducking for cover after that death because the legislation prevented anything being done about the potential hazard that existed there until an accident occurred. This legislation will create a similar situation yet we can avoid it by allowing the Work Health Authority to enter work places where it thinks there is sufficient need.

Mr Palmer: Have you read clause 36?

Mr SMITH: I have read clause 36 many times.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, as was pointed out by the member for Leanyer, clause 36 details the powers and functions, but clause 39 is very specific. It is titled: 'Offences in Relation to Investigations'. The powers are there for the authority to enter work places and investigate. There are also powers under clause 36. If the Leader of the Opposition cannot read that and understand it, he has a problem that I cannot assist him with. It is there in black and white and I think anyone who reads it will understand it without any difficulty.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I will accept an assurance from the Chief Minister that the authority will be able to walk into any place, at any time, to investigate such matters as it sees fit, without having to seek the minister's approval. If he can tell me that now, I will not pursue the matter any further.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I have tried to explain to the honourable member for Nhulunbuy.

Mr SMITH: You had better explain to the Minister for Education.

Mr HATTON: I think the Leader of the Opposition understands the point that I am making. There is a capacity to create a generalised inspectorial right and there is also the capacity for the minister to limit that inspectorial or investigatory right. This refers specifically to investigations as distinct from routine inspections or checks on work places in terms of compliance. Specific investigations relating to specific incidents will involve a whole range of directions. In the end, as with any piece of legislation, it will be the administrative rules, and the delegations that surround them, that put the flesh around the bones of the legislation and make it work. I believe that, in the absence of any other legislative right to appear, the authority will have the right to enter work places with respect to the exercise of its generalised functions and responsibilities under the legislation. In respect of the investigatory roles outlined in paragraph (h), which we are debating now, that will be particularly dependent on the delegations and general directions issued by the minister.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I think we may have to report progress because it is obvious that some members of the government agree with us about the necessity to have this in the legislation. They are saying, incorrectly, that it is in the legislation already, but they agree that it should be there. The Chief Minister at least understands the legislation and realises that it is not there at the moment. Thus, the opposition and many members opposite agree that it should be in the legislation. On that basis, we really have the majority of the Assembly on 1 side of the argument and the Chief Minister on the other. Mr Chairman, I really think that we ought to report progress.

The committee divided:

Ayes 6

Noes 17

Mr Bell

Mr B. Collins

Mr Ede

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Leo

Mr Smith

Mr D.W. Collins

Mr Dale

Mr Dondas

Mr Finch

Mr Firmin

Mr Hanrahan

Mr Harris

Mr Hatton

Mr McCarthy

Mr Manzie

Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Palmer

Mr Perron

Mr Poole

Mr Setter

Mr Steele

Mr Tuxworth

Amendment negatived.

Clause 10 agreed to.

Clauses 11 to 19 agreed to.

Clause 20:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 94.4 and 94.5.

At present, the advisory council will consist of 10 persons other than the statutory members who are appointed by the minister. We have a couple of



objections to that. First of all, we believe that the number is too large. It is difficult to have an effective advisory group made up of 10 people. All the modern organisational theory says that 6 or 7 is probably the maximum number of people for an effective advisory group.

Secondly, and more importantly, we believe that the powers given to the minister to select members of the advisory group are far too wide. There is no restriction on the minister's ability to select a particular person. He has to go through a process of advertising among interested organisations but the ultimate decision is his. We believe that is wrong.

There are obviously 2 basic groups involved in the work health exercise. One group is the employees and the other is the employers and insurers. We believe that it is appropriate for this advisory group - and I stress that it is an advisory group - to be comprised equally of employees and employers and insurers. That is why we have moved these amendments.

There has been considerable concern amongst different groups in the community about the way this bill has developed, particularly at the way some of the benefit levels have changed. It is important that the first advisory council be a well-balanced body, effectively representing the interests of the groups concerned. We believe that our proposal provides for an equal balance between the major interest groups and also for a more formal basis for selection of people from those groups.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, we will be opposing the amendments, not because of the underlying principle that the Leader of the Opposition has mentioned, that there should be appropriate representation from trade unions and employer organisations, but rather because the opposition's amendment is far too restrictive. The Leader of the Opposition is proposing that there shall be 2 nominees from the Northern Territory Trades and Labor Council and 2 representatives from employer organisations.

There are more than 2 employer organisations. There are also trade unions that are not members of the Trades and Labor Council and, in saying that, I am not being derogatory of the Trades and Labor Council. The fact is that it generally represents the trade union movement in the Northern Territory, and I would not want the opposition to misinterpret my view about that. However, I must make a couple of other points because I have had to go through the process of consulting with interest groups in preparing this legislation. It has really been brought home to me that there are many more relevant and important interest groups, in so far as work health legislation is concerned, than simply the employer organisations and the trade unions.

It is our intention to advertise for nominations for membership on this council from any organisation claiming to represent the interest of employers, any organisation claiming to represent the interests of workers, any organisation claiming to represent the interests of insurers, any organisation or persons concerned with medical and rehabilitative treatment of workers and any organisation or persons concerned with occupational health and safety. That is quite a wide range of interests, and we are looking for the larger and broader cross-section to ensure an appropriate balance and mix. For that reason, we will be pressing for the maintenance of the clause as it stands.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would simply like to point out that the membership of the corresponding body in Victoria includes 5 members of the Victorian Trades Hall Council as well as 5 from the Congress of Victorian Employer Associations and 3 persons with experience in occupational health and safety.

In New South Wales, the composition includes the Coordinator of Occupational Health and Safety and Rehabilitation Services, 3 representatives of the New South Wales Labour Council, 3 from the employer groups and 1 nominated by the Minister for Health.

That is how those 2 comparable bodies are structured. The idea has been to get people from both sides of the industrial fence and to balance them with people who have had experience in occupational health and safety. I would be disappointed if the government did not recognise the benefits of maintaining that practice in the Northern Territory.

Mr HATTON: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has just argued against himself. He has just quoted examples of representation which include persons other than those representing unions and employers. The opposition's amendment refers only to 4 other members, of whom 2 shall be appointed by the minister on the nomination of the Trades and Labor Council, with 2 to represent the interests respectively of employers and insurers. There is no representation from the medical fraternity nor from the rehabilitation industry. More importantly, why should the trade unions have 50% of the representation?

Mr Smith: It is more than likely that they will represent 50% of the people hurt. That is why.

Mr HATTON: The unions have a role, but 50% is too much. To restrict the size of the advisory council to 4 and then to allocate 2 places to nominees of the Trades and Labor Council would make it almost impossible to obtain reasonable representation.

Amendments negatived.

Clause 20 agreed to.

Clauses 21 to 27 agreed to.

Clause 28:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.6.

The purpose of this amendment is to delete paragraph (d) from the definition of 'practicable'. The cost of removing or mitigating a hazard or risk should not make that removal impracticable. This is a pretty basic philosophical question. Either people are more important or goods and chattels are more important. I suspect that is where we will differ in respect of this particular amendment.

The definition of 'practicable' as the clause currently stands states that:

'practicable' in relation to the hazard or risk means practicable having regard to: (a) its severity; (b) the state of knowledge about the hazard or risk and suitability of ways of mitigating it; (c) the availability and suitability of ways to remove or mitigate it; and (d) the cost of removing or mitigating it.

We believe that paragraph (d) places an unnecessary restriction on the definition of 'practicable'. If there is a threat to the health and safety of people, no cost ought to be too expensive to remove or mitigate it.

Mr Hatton: That is nonsensical.

Mr SMITH: If you are prepared to argue that a hazard which causes loss of life should be left in place, I will be pleased to hear you do so. It would typify the attitude of the member for Fannie Bay. I have made my point, although I suspect I might have to make it again later.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I wish the Leader of the Opposition would not make assumptions about the government's philosophical approach. Inevitably, he gets it wrong. It is not an appropriate way to conduct rational debate, particularly in the committee stage when we are trying to grapple with legislation.

The Leader of the Opposition has said that this is a debate about whether money or people are more important. That is not what this particular clause is about. He assumes that this clause means that nothing will be done if the cost is too high and that, therefore, lives will be at risk.

The definition has 4 aspects, and the cost of removing a hazard is only 1 of them. It may well be that, in a situation where there is a genuine threat to life and limb, the only way of remedying that, because of the expense involved, would be by a cessation of operations. It would be better to go out of business than to continue to put the lives of people at risk. Other aspects of the definition include the severity of the hazard, the degree of knowledge about it and the availability of means of removing it. These are practical and worthwhile considerations. The definition in no way detracts from the statutory obligation to provide a safe working environment.

Mr Smith: Except if it is too costly.

Mr HATTON: That is not right. The fundamental responsibility to provide a safe working environment remains. Cost is an obvious factor. For example, it might cost Nabalco \$50 000 to fix a problem which is causing danger. In the context of that operation, the cost is reasonable. However, that cost would be a very different matter for a small structural steel factory in Winnellie. In that instance, the operator could not be expected to pay \$50 000 to eliminate the risk. We would need to look at other ways of dealing with the problem. It is a question of cost. I am not saying that a less safe work environment may be created in the small business than would be accepted in a large business. Perhaps the solutions are different and relevant to the nature of the work in a small business.

Mr Chairman, the member for Nhulunbuy and myself have both worked in large mining organisations and in small organisations. The work practices, the whole technology and environment are very different and solutions can be very different to provide a safe working environment. Inevitably, the solution does have a cost attached to it and it must be a practicable cost.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I hear precisely what the Chief Minister is saying and certainly there are many different work places. However, it has become a very strange debate indeed when a practical solution is deemed to be practical when it is developed around the ability of somebody to pay for it. I suspect that perhaps employees who are employed by less wealthy employers not only run the risk of not receiving their pay packet, but also the risk of not working in a very safe place. There is a considerable problem for employees of small operators. It would seem that not only are they exposed to more risk potentially but, because of the very nature of small business, they are involved in the prospect of some financial mishap as well.

Mr HATTON: I want to clarify this in case there is any misconception. If we delete paragraph (d) and there is a risk of low severity, but which would be frighteningly expensive to remove and could send the employer bankrupt, would honourable members opposite close the business down? In every job, there is some risk. It is impossible to work without running some risk. Mr Chairman, in this room, you run a risk that you could trip over the steps and break your legs. It is a low risk but it is there. We cannot totally disregard costs. That does not mean to say that we simply allow people to be placed at risk purely to save an employer money. It is part of a package of matters to be addressed in dealing with the practicability of removing the risk.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 28 agreed to.

Clause 29:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 94.7, 94.8 and 94.9.

The effect of these amendments would be to transfer a responsibility for some employers under the regulations to a responsibility for all employers under the act to monitor the health and safety of their workers. Subclause (3) provides that 'regulations may provide that a prescribed employer or a member of a prescribed class of employers shall monitor the health of his workers'. We want that to read: 'an employer shall monitor the health of his workers'.

We propose to take the matter out of the regulations and insert it in the act, and take away the ability of some employers not to participate in that monitoring exercise. We believe it is essential that all employers should establish systems to monitor the health and safety of workers. We accept that the systems that will be necessary to monitor the health and safety of workers will vary considerably from industry to industry. We accept also that construction and mine sites and other high risk areas are not covered by this legislation because they believe that there is an obligation on all employers - no matter what the work conditions - to monitor health and safety.

In office-type situations, it will not amount to much at all but an effective monitoring system for health and safety in an office will hopefully prevent RSI-type occurrences which have cost the work health schemes throughout Australia considerable money over the last few years. We would like to see a regular monitoring system involving hearing tests in work places where there is continuing loud noise and regular x-rays in work places where that is appropriate. Where appropriate, there should be general health checks in other work places.

Employers have an obligation to maintain a safe and healthy work place and, as part of that obligation, they need to monitor the health of their workers. Although it may involve them in some small initial costs, there will be long-term savings. When the system works properly, there will be fewer people off work and fewer people claiming benefits. I have stated consistently that the best way of bringing premiums down is to keep as many people as possible out of the system. This is 1 way of doing this. We do not see it as an expensive exercise and I understand that that could be a concern for members opposite. We believe, however, that the Work Health Authority should be able to require employers to be able to demonstrate that they have a health and safety system in operation. That will vary significantly from industry to industry.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, we oppose this amendment. I must say that most of the amendments will be opposed mainly because all of these issues have been argued by ourselves and various industry participants over the course of the last 2 years. I doubt there will be many arguments raised tonight that will be different from those that we have debated over that period.

The subclause to be inserted says: 'An employer shall monitor the health of his workers and conditions likely to affect the health and safety of his workers at the work place under his control and management'. Superficially, that sounds like motherhood stuff that could provide all sorts of great benefits for the community. What is the relevance of this? We would be asking a small employer in a tuckshop in Winnellie to provide health monitoring for his casual employees.

Mr Smith: I would have thought that would be 1 of the prime cases.

Mr HATTON: The health of a fork-lift driver in a warehouse will be monitored and not because there is anything associated with his work that constitutes a risk to his health. It is simply because it sounds like a good idea that the employer should accept the general responsibility for the individual's general health. This is not a national social welfare scheme; this is a work health scheme. It is associated with the health of employees at work and the influences of work on the health of employees. Where a work environment could pose a health problem, the legislation will cover that.

In fact, the legislation improves considerably on existing circumstances. In relation to mercury vapour, the uranium industry, sandblasting, quarrying etc, where there could be potential health risks because of the nature of the industry and the nature of the work, the monitoring and control functions must be brought into effect. It is not relevant, however, to do that for Truck City at Berrimah or the Lee Dynasty Restaurant in Darwin.

Mr Ede: Have you eaten their tucker?

Mr HATTON: The member for Stuart is quite unreasonably suggesting that the health of the customers might be at risk. I totally reject any such argument; I think the food there is magnificent.

This legislation is not geared to creating some national social security or national health scheme. This legislation will ensure that the employee will not have his health or safety affected by his work. The legislation provides a mechanism for monitoring where it is appropriate, but that does not involve everybody in the entire work force. If the opposition amendments were to be passed, they would merely drive industry bankrupt. Certainly, we want to reduce accidents but that must be done in a way that is effective and practical, not in accordance with some Utopian socialist dream.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, this is ridiculous. The Chief Minister has decided that he will not be reasonable in examining the amendments. The amendment is eminently reasonable. He has accepted its rationality in respect of many different industries, but he refuses to accept it in respect of all industry. Self-regulation is his beautiful dream. We do not need other people keeping an eye on things because everybody will be looking after his own show. He is quite prepared to give people the power to look after their own bailiwick, but he has forgotten that there is no power without responsibility.

What he is refusing to do is put the responsibility on the employers to keep an eye on the health of their workers. We are asking that the employer

have responsibility to monitor the health of his workers and the conditions likely to affect the health and safety of workers under his control and management.

Mr FIRMIN: I just cannot understand the rationale behind the argument from the opposition in respect of this amendment. The Leader of the Opposition said that every employer should have a monitoring system in place for every employee. He said that there ought to be at least annual x-rays and annual medical checks.

Mr Smith: I did not say that at all.

Mr FIRMIN: He suggested that that would be a method of monitoring the health of the workers where appropriate. If you are going to monitor the health of an employee, you must have a base. The only way to have a base is to have him undergo a medical examination before he commences work.

The thrust of his argument is that everybody works in a work place where there is an insidious threat of injury of some sort. I cannot understand how his argument has any validity for some of the occupations that I quickly jotted down. Take the example of workers on pastoral properties in the member for Stuart's electorate. How would the pastoralist monitor the health of a ringer or a fencing contractor? Where will he send his workers for the initial check? How will he monitor them? Will he have a truckload of doctors come out at regular intervals to check his workers, his ringers, his fencers?

Mr Ede: Are you denying my constituents the right to medical attention?

Mr FIRMIN: I am denying them the right to medical attention at regular intervals at the expense of their employers which is what the opposition is suggesting. What would be the effect of monitoring for the sorts of injuries that they are likely to suffer during their normal working life? How are you going to stop them falling off a horse or off a motorbike?

There are roadhouses all down the Track and people in the itinerant work force. What do you do about those people, particularly those outside large towns or in the mining towns which is where members opposite seem to be pushing for this change to occur? If we are to be sensible about monitoring health, we must have a starting point. There must be a medical check before employees even commence work so that there is a base to start from. The whole thing is nonsense.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I cannot let that one go. The member for Ludmilla named some of the most dangerous occupations in the Northern Territory and said that it cannot be done in those instances. Where will it occur even under the regulations?

Mr Firmin: Health monitoring, not accident monitoring.

Mr EDE: Health monitoring is possible under the regulations if they are prescribed industries. The member for Ludmilla named a couple of the most dangerous industries in the Northern Territory, ringing and working in mines, and said that we cannot handle those. How are we going to handle them? It does not sound to me as though there is much of a commitment towards the principle from the members opposite.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, in respect of the mining industry, we would anticipate that generally there would be monitoring programs in place. Even

in mines where there are no unions, we would anticipate that there would be monitoring programs and there are many mines around that do not have unions associated with them.

Mr Ede: Because ringers are not unionised, you let them go.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the member for Stuart is chattering away over there about his ringers. I accept that there are problems because they are doing a dangerous job. They do face risk of injury but monitoring their health will not improve their safety. There are matters associated with those jobs that need to be addressed but 1 of them is not monitoring health. How would one go about monitoring the health of ringers on some of the properties in the Northern Territory?

This amendment would add an incredible cost burden to industry, to business and to every employer. It would cost people their jobs left, right and centre because the employers could not afford to employ them.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the Chief Minister has demonstrated his ignorance about the cattle industry. There are many things that can be done by the employer to ensure that the health and safety of the workers in that industry are correctly looked after. He can ensure that surcingles and girth straps are kept properly oiled and do not break.

Mr Hatton: What does that have to do with monitoring health?

Mr EDE: 'Monitor the health of his workers or conditions likely to affect the health and safety of his workers at a work place under his control and management'. Read the whole thing.

Mr Chairman, there are many things that the boss can do out on those cattle stations. I nearly lost the sight of 1 eye when I was working on a station. In many places, there is no insistence on twisting over the end of the piece of wire when you are fencing. The wire can spring back and injure the eye. The boss could insist on proper practices to increase safety in the work place. I am not going to belabour the point. In the second-reading debate, I spoke about the extreme dangers of that industry and the lack of attention that has been given to them. I am most offended that the member for Ludmilla has not even taken notice of what I said and that he refers to this as either a safe occupation or 1 that he will not take much notice of.

Mr HATTON: I ask the member for Stuart to refer to clause 29(1): 'An employer shall provide and maintain, so far as practicable, a working environment and a work place that is safe and without risk to the health of his workers or any other persons working at the work place'. Everything the honourable member has been talking about such as girths etc is covered by subclause (1).

Subclause (2) says: 'Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), an employer contravenes that subsection if he fails to ...', and specific examples are referred to there. Mr Chairman, those obligations are there.

The opposition's proposed new subclause (2A) talks about specific monitoring functions and bureaucratic conditions which may be totally impracticable and which will do nothing to improve the safety or health of the employee in so far as his work environment is concerned,

Amendments negatived.

Clause 29 agreed to.

Clauses 30 and 31 agreed to.

Clause 32:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.10.

Frankly, every time this matter arose in relation to the various drafts of this legislation, I raised my utmost concern about the wording of subclause 32(1). I will read: 'Where there is an immediate risk of severe injury to a worker at a work place and that risk is not removed by the employer, the worker may cease work in the area in which the risk is present'.

I have problems with that wording. Firstly, there is a difficulty in determining what is a severe injury and, secondly, there is an implication that a worker could suffer an injury at work that is judged not to be severe and therefore could not cease work. He might sprain his leg or perhaps break an arm or a finger and, if that injury is not judged to be severe, the employer can say: 'You stay there. Don't you leave work or you are in trouble'. That is absolutely ridiculous.

The amendment proposes that the words 'severe injury' be replaced by the words 'to the health and safety of'. The subclause would then read: 'Where there is an immediate risk to the health and safety of a worker at a work place ...'. I think that is the appropriate way to handle this particular matter. It is consistent with the wording used in a later clause. The original wording is very strange indeed. It leaves the impression that an employee could face an immediate risk of an injury at a work place and he would not have the ability, under this legislation, to cease work.

In this day and age, as we approach the 21st century, every employee has the right to refuse to work under conditions where there is a risk that he may be injured. That is what we are talking about. We want to remove this clause which, as it reads, indicates that he does not have that right. We want to broaden the wording of the clause. The protection for the employer is there - 'where there is an immediate risk'. Protection for the worker is provided by the words: 'to the health and safety of the worker'. The protections are built into our amendment. But the original clause offers no protection for the worker. The 'immediate risk' in the clause as it stands at present provides protection for the employer and the 'severe injury' is a protection for the employer as well. There is no protection there for the worker, because he has to make a judgment, as does the employer, as to whether he will be injured 'severely' or not if he continues to work.

If the existing wording is taken literally and people do not use their common sense, there could be disputes between employers and employees. That is completely unnecessary. If the words 'an immediate risk to health and safety of the worker' are substituted, the problem will be covered. The amendment would remove also the implication that a worker could expect, under some circumstances as outlined in this bill, to go to work and not be able to move from a dangerous place unless there were a risk of severe injury. I have said this 3 times during various debates on the draft legislation. I ask now: please change it.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I do not know how many times the Leader of the Opposition has been involved in industrial safety issues in the work place. I know the member for Nhulunbuy has because he and I have discussed the subject



on a number of occasions. There is a well-defined practice in the work place that, where there is a risk of injury to a worker, work will cease until the problem has been sorted out. That is the general practice; it is an industrial issue.

In that environment, however, many disputes have erupted as to whether or not the issue is such that it justifies the cessation of work. Over the course of time, procedures, understandings and practices have evolved in particular organisations. One of the difficulties in trying to provide a statutory right to cease work inevitably means limiting that statutory right to a point where a balance is reached: someone will be hurt if work continues there. There is an immediate risk of someone being hurt as distinct from dispute about whether a person may or may not be hurt. I can assure the honourable members opposite that it does happen on the job.

Mr Smith: But it stipulates 'severe' injury. That is the point we are making.

Mr HATTON: We do not want severe injury to occur either. However, I assure honourable members opposite that some employees will always find something that is wrong on the job and use that as an excuse to stop work. Often, in industrial circumstances, that can be used as a vehicle to generate pressure in an industrial campaign. I know of at least 1 honourable member opposite who is aware of those practices that occur from time to time or with particular individuals.

When making statutory provisions, it is always difficult to strike that balance. I do not think any man can stand up and indicate that he has the perfect wording and the solution to the issue. To extend this to the health and safety of workers, in my view, is to extend it too far the other way. Inevitably, the legal interpretation of this will arise, and I believe it will be one of the normal court interpretations of that applied to a reasonable man.

We have provided for settlements of disputes flowing from this issue and the utilisation of the chief inspectors as interveners. Of course, none of this takes away from the employees' or the employers' normal rights to take actions through boards of reference or under awards. Dealing with the matter under this mechanism will in no way impede their rights under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act or awards. Members need to understand that those rights are in existence already. We have tried to blend this so we do not cut across the rights of the employer or the employee under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act or under awards but provide a recognition that, under certain circumstances, an employee may stop work and retain his right to continue to be paid.

It is a difficult balance to achieve. We believe we have it right. If these matters prove to be unreasonable when the legislation is in operation, that will be a problem that the advisory council will be able to address. I do not believe that this provision will require amendment when the legislation comes into operation. The opposition should not lose sight of the fact that there are options to ensure practical implementation.

Mr LEO: This is one of those things that is on the very cutting edge of industrial relations in the work place. Inevitably, there will be some dispute between an employee and an employer as to whether a risk is severe. It must be fairly apparent whether or not a risk is immediate. That is the cutting edge. If it goes beyond that point, normal industrial practice says

that it is the employer's right to hire and fire. In fact, he can sack that person. If that employee is a member of an influential industrial organisation, he may very well retain his employment. If he is not a member of an influential industrial organisation, then he is doomed for the unemployment queue because there is nothing in this legislation to compel an employer to re-employ an ex-employee. This debate has been occurring on the national scene for quite some time and I am afraid that this legislation will not solve that problem.

However, I would suggest that it is not practical to expect people to assess in their own minds not only whether there is a risk or not but also the severity of the potential injury. The retention of the word 'severe' will mean nothing except to the employer. It will add nothing to this legislation or to industrial practice. It will mean nothing to the sacked worker. It will be meaningful for the employer if civil action is taken against him for wrongful dismissal.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I would ask honourable members to have a look at subclauses 32(3) and (4). I think we are getting to the nub of this problem. This is where there is a dispute between the employer and the employee as to whether the risk is such that work should cease on that job. Subclause (3) says that a dispute between a worker and his employer as to whether there is immediate risk to the worker may be referred by either party to the authority or to a person to whom the power of the authority under subsection (4) is delegated for a ruling. That subclause is there to provide an independent third party's assessment of that dispute. It does not give the employer the right to make the decision as to whether it is safe or not safe. If there is a dispute, there is a reference. Subclause (4) flows from that. I quote:

(4) The authority or its delegate shall, immediately on receiving a request for a ruling under subsection (3), investigate the matter and, where it or its delegate, as the case may be, is satisfied that -

- (a) the risk exists, take action appropriate under section 41; or
- (b) there is no such risk, advise the employer and the worker accordingly and the employer may require the worker to forthwith resume his usual work.

In other words, the worker does not have to risk his life while the investigation takes place. Rather, there is a mechanism for resolving the issue as quickly as possible. This provides some protection in the circumstance referred to by the member for Nhulunbuy. A third party can investigate and the worker cannot be sacked while the investigation proceeds.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the Chief Minister has missed the point. Subsection (3) refers to the immediacy of the risk. The dispute has to be about the immediacy of the risk, not about the extent of the risk, and any reasonable person should see that. It is possible that we could compromise on this amendment if the Chief Minister were willing simply to remove the word 'severe' from subclause 32(1). It is ridiculous to argue that the immediate risk of severe injury entitles the worker to stop, but the immediate risk of injury does not.

The Chief Minister's remarks on industrial relations lead to a fairly strange conclusion. If the worker is under threat of immediate risk of severe injury, he can stop work and there is a process by which the matter can be

discussed under the auspices of the authority. On the other hand, if the worker faces an immediate risk to his health or safety, to use the words of our amendment, his only option is to go on strike because there is no mechanism for settling the dispute.

Mr HATTON: The member for Stuart is picking on the word 'severe' and suggesting that unless a person is about to be killed or have his arm chopped off in the work place, the risk of injury is not severe. For example, a person might be working with a sharp knife to cut linoleum and that person would be running the risk of cutting himself. He would not be running the risk of a severe injury unless he really did not know the work. What constitutes 'severe' is a value judgment. Inevitably, it always will be. However, it would be quite unreasonable to say that the risk of any sort of injury in the work place justifies stopping work.

Mr Smith: Why?

Mr HATTON: Because there is some risk at all times.

Mr Smith: It says 'immediate' risk.

Mr HATTON: There is some immediate risk just in walking through a factory.

Mr Smith: Rubbish.

Mr HATTON: That is a fact, Mr Chairman. It might be a very remote risk but ...

Mr Smith: Well, it is not immediate if it is remote! Goodness gracious!

Mr HATTON: The likelihood of the event occurring is very limited. However, the time duration is immediate. Does that explain it for the Leader of the Opposition?

We are talking about a situation where it is unreasonable to expect a person to continue to work. For example, if a fence around machinery is broken or damaged, it would be unreasonable to expect any employee to continue to work in the vicinity of that machinery because there would be an immediate risk of serious injury. That is the sort of situation that inevitably arises on the job. I know that the member for Stuart has great difficulty in understanding the realities of the work place, but I can assure him ...

Mr Smith: So do you.

Mr HATTON: ... that that situation arises and, 99 times out of 100, the employer and the worker know the rules and they fix it up and it does not become an issue. In 1 case in 100, there is a dispute, and this subclause provides that it cannot relate to just any old ...

Mr Smith: Any old injury?

Mr HATTON: No, it is not. I do not think I should stop work because there is a risk of nicking my finger with a piece of paper - which can happen in an office. That is not a risk that justifies stopping work.

Mr Smith: We agree with you.

Mr HATTON: The legislation determines that there is a level of severity that needs to be taken into account. How can that severity be measured? It becomes a matter of judgment on the job. If there is a dispute - as in that 1 case in 100 - there is provision to call in the government authority which is responsible for the administration of safety legislation, to determine whether that work place is safe or not. That is a totally reasonable provision.

Mr SMITH: It would also be totally reasonable if the wording were changed to what is proposed in our amendment. It would be equally reasonable and would provide the employee with greater protection. On occasions like this, the Chief Minister is proud to trot out his vast industrial relations experience which has been gained all over the Northern Territory.

Mr Perron: You would do well to listen to it.

Mr SMITH: I have listened to it. I have not learned much, I must admit, but I have listened to it. He said that he was attempting to mesh this legislation with existing legislation relating to the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission.

I would like to see him argue a case before the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission that an injured worker was refused permission to leave his place of work because, in the employer's judgment, his injury was not severe enough. He would be laughed out of court. Whatever the Chief Minister says, the existing subclause allows people to face an immediate risk of injury on the job without being able to do anything about it. The worker cannot leave the job, because the dispute-settling procedure does not provide, once the dispute has been registered and is being heard, that the employee can cease work. Clause 32(4)(b) says that he can go back to work after it is over, but he has no permission - read clause 32(3) - to cease work whilst the dispute is being settled. Even if the dispute is registered, the employee may be in a situation where he has to continue working in that dangerous place.

I conclude by making the point that the Chief Minister is probably right in saying that we will not see too many of these occurrences and possibly not see any. That is because employers will not demand that employees work in unsafe conditions and employees certainly will not work in those unsafe conditions. What we are saying is that the legislation should reflect the industrial realities put into place by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and the industrial realities on the ground. We all know that people will not work in unsafe conditions where there is the risk of injury and we ought to change the legislation to reflect that fact.

The committee divided:

Ayes 6

Noes 16

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

Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr Dale  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Hanrahan  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie

Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Setter  
Mr Steele  
Mr Tuxworth

Amendment negatived.

Clause 32 agreed to.

Clauses 33 to 39 agreed to.

Clause 40:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 94.11 to 94.16.

This is consistent with the approach the opposition has taken to the bill of trying to prevent accidents. What these amendments attempt to do is to strengthen the occupational health and safety side so that the authority has the right to issue an improvement notice prior to an event or where a contravention of the act is likely to occur not simply when it has occurred. In subclause (1), we propose to replace 'may' by 'shall'. This will ensure that, where there is a contravention or where there is likely to be a contravention, the authority must issue an improvement notice.

We do this to ensure that there is a record kept, to increase awareness of the need for occupational health and safety, to keep the pressure on slack employers, to identify slack employees and to establish consistent standards since the authority will have to delegate this function outside Darwin. One of the real problems with this legislation is that there will be no offices outside Darwin. It will be very difficult for the Work Health Authority to police activities in some of the more remote areas of the Territory and, in that, I include Alice Springs as being remote from Darwin.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, it is our opinion that, as it stands, clause 40 is a bit like closing the gate after the horse has bolted. I would have thought that any Work Health Authority and, indeed, this government would be more interested in preventing industrial accidents by providing healthy working conditions for employees than in paying remuneration to persons who are injured. I would have thought that it would have been far more productive for the Work Health Authority to involve itself in a positive role in respect of the health and safety of employees as opposed to a negative role which is not unlike that of an undertaker after everything is over and done with and it is a bit too late. I hope that either the Chief Minister or perhaps his adviser on insurance matters could give us some explanation as to why clause 40(1) does not allow the authority to play a more productive and positive role.

Mr FIRMIN: Mr Chairman, I have great difficulty with the amendment in one respect. The improvement notice issuing provisions are clearly set out in respect of contraventions that take place or are likely to continue. I would like the opposition to tell us how we are supposed to guess in advance when a contravention is likely to take place.

Amendments negatived.

Clause 40 agreed to.

Clause 41:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.17.

From the words of the member for Ludmilla, I would expect him to support this because what it does is take away the discretion that the authority has to issue a prohibition notice. Where there is an immediate risk to the health or safety of a person, we believe that it is appropriate that the authority shall issue a prohibition notice so that the matter can be fixed.

Mr FIRMIN: Mr Chairman, I am not going to enter the argument that we had once before in respect of 'may' and 'shall'. What I am saying is that there are different clauses in the bill whereby different things shall occur. They could be independent or interconnected. If you insert the imperative 'shall', action must occur under that clause and therefore the same should apply elsewhere. You would find that an improvement notice, a prohibition notice and many other things would have to occur in the 1 action because each of those threats would be identified in respect of those areas.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, in the absence of some clear example where it would have an effect on some other part of the legislation, I am not prepared to accept that explanation. If the member can indicate clearly where this change will have a catastrophic effect on some other part of the legislation, I will be prepared to listen to his advice.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I accept the point made by the member for Nhulunbuy. I cannot see where it will have any direct implications between the clauses. The fundamental issue is whether or not we believe there should be some discretionary right left with the authority itself. It is our view that discretion should be with the authority.

Mr SMITH: It has the discretionary right to decide whether there is an immediate risk. Surely, if the authority decides that there is an immediate risk to the health or safety of a person, it must take appropriate action and the appropriate action in this clause is to issue a prohibition notice. Why does it need discretion after it has identified that there is an immediate risk to the health and safety of a person? What else can it do that will alleviate that risk?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition has answered his own question. If he believes that the authority has no other choice, then it will issue such notices. In my view, the member is certainly taking away some discretion of the authority in this regard. It would seem that it is very hard to envisage all the circumstances where the authority may believe that a safety matter may arise in a work place and, having formed that opinion, go to the work place with the intention of issuing such a prohibition notice. While it is there, it may learn that it formed its original opinion wrongly or that remedial action had been taken in the meantime, and therefore cease to take any action at all.

Mr SMITH: In that case, there is no immediate risk to health or safety, and there is no authority to issue a prohibition notice.

Mr PERRON: The proposed amendment seems to be removing a discretionary power. The authority would be responsible for its actions. I have no doubt that it would be in strife if it were aware of a potentially risky situation, took no action and there was an accident. I am sure that members of the authority will bear in mind that they may well be charged with dereliction of duty.

Mr HATTON: This is an issue of the prerogative of the authority. We are dealing with the practicalities of a multitude of circumstances that might exist. I refer honourable members back to clause 40 which says:

Where the authority is of the opinion of that a person -

(a) is contravening this act'; or

(b) has contravened this act in circumstances that make it likely that the contravention will continue or be repeated,

it may issue an improvement notice ...

The opposition did not object to that at all.

Mr Smith: We did. We moved an amendment and you deferred it.

Mr HATTON: If we come to clause 41, a similar circumstance applies. It may well be that the authority comes into the work place and sees that there is a risk there. It approaches the employer and says: 'You cannot do that. Will you fix that up?' The employer agrees and fixes the problem. You would not issue a prohibition notice under those circumstances.

Mr Smith: You would have done that at the improvement notice stage.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, this does not relate to the improvement notice. It is a prohibition against a certain course of action. The employer has quite readily agreed not to carry out that action. Why issue the prohibition notice? Neither notice may be required. The employer may fix the problem without them. Why engage in a whole lot of paperwork under those circumstances? If the employer is being prickly and will not take directions to fix the problem, the clause gives the authority the capacity to use its teeth and issue an improvement notice or a prohibition notice.

Mr Smith: You have won us.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 41 agreed to.

Clauses 42 to 44 agreed to.

Clauses 45 and 46 taken together by leave:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 94.18 and 94.19.

What we are proposing existed in a previous version of this bill. We are saying that a prospective employer shall not refuse or deliberately omit to offer employment to a prospective worker solely on the basis that he has been active on health and safety issues. The Chief Minister asked how that could be proved and we accept that as a valid question. However, I think the principle is worth stating. If we are going to take work health seriously, it is important that a person should not be discriminated against because he has been active on occupational health and safety issues. The government has accepted that principle in relation to people in employment. That is valid and that is good.

Originally, the bill went 1 stage further. A prospective employee looking for a job could not be discriminated against because he had a reputation for being active in occupational health and safety issues. Our amendment is concerned only with discrimination on that basis. Obviously, when an employer considers applicants for a position, he will use a number of criteria to select a particular applicant. We are saying that the situation should never arise where the best prospective employee is disqualified simply on the grounds that he has a reputation for being involved in occupational health and safety issues.

We are also saying that where 2 people are equipped equally for a job, 1 of them should not be discriminated against because of any involvement in health and safety issues. I know it is difficult to police but it is an important point of principle. It is just as important as the safeguards provided for existing employees which are just as impossible to police. A determined employer who wants to get rid of an employee will be able to manufacture reasons that are not connected with the provisions of this legislation. As a principle, we believe strongly that the bill should be extended to include this provision which was part of an earlier draft of the bill.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, it seems ridiculous that the government will not even debate this. It had the good sense to include it in the first draft but it has now been omitted. I can only imagine that pressure from employers forced the government to do that. I believe that it is an important statement of principle, even though there may be difficulties with implementation. It gives the employee some feeling of safety against what can be blatant misuse of power.

Mr HATTON: The amendment is a motherhood statement which makes people feel warm inside but has no practical application. It is impossible to police or implement. There is no point in making a law which cannot be enforced, and this is one of them.

Mr SMITH: I disagree. It is certainly possible to enforce these things. Courts of this land are becoming very experienced in dealing with difficult cases, as has been demonstrated by some of the sexual harassment cases being conducted in Australia lately with great publicity. They have been resolved by the courts, whether satisfactorily or not. Some have succeeded and some have failed. It would be very difficult for a prospective employee to prove a case under this particular law, but the amendment would provide him with the opportunity to put forward a case to an independent body. I think that is the important thing.

If we want people to take occupational health and safety seriously, we have to give them the protection of the law. If we want people to be active in the work place in promoting occupational health and safety, we have to give them a guarantee that they will not be discriminated against in terms of their employment. The government has gone some of the way by applying this principle to people in employment. However, if people want to go for a new job, there is no protection for them. That just does not stand up. It is not a logical approach to the problem. If it is the intention to provide anti-discrimination provisions in this legislation, it must be done consistently. The federal government does not tell women in the work force that they are covered in this particular area but, if they change their jobs, they will not be covered. The legislation is comprehensive. We are saying that the government must be consistent and reasonable. It needs to extend the principle to cover employees in all situations.



Amendments negatived.

Clauses 45 and 46 agreed to.

Clause 47:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94 20.

In our view, this is 1 of the more important amendments. If occupational health and safety is to work, it has to be a 2-way street. It has to involve both the employers and the employees. Probably the most significant weakness of this bill is its failure to involve both the employers and the employees. Each draft has been seen to go more firmly towards the employers' camp, giving fewer and fewer powers to employees. No one is surprised by that because, obviously, that is the bent of the government which put it together.

Mr Perron: So your amendments are all going the other way?

Mr SMITH: Yes. It is fair to say that our amendments will redress the imbalances that we see in the bill.

The current clause 47 is what remains of what was originally a much stronger section on occupational health and safety and codes of practice. It does some good things and we accept that. It allows the minister to approve, by notice in the gazette, a code of practice for a particular work place or a particular group of employees. It allows the employer and employee to propose to the minister that a particular code of practice be adopted to cover that work place. However, it provides no powers whatsoever for employees to be involved in or to develop codes of practice for their own safety. They have nowhere to go. Perhaps if they had a sympathetic employer, they might be able to work with him and he could take the code and put it up to the minister.

Mr Chairman, I put it to you that employees have the right to sit down in their own time and come up with what they believe to be an appropriate code of practice to cover their working conditions. They then have the right to submit that code of practice to the minister who may or may not approve it. We are not asking for the unions to be able to take unilateral action; we are not asking for that at all. We are asking for the ability for members of a union to draw up a code of practice and to present it to the minister for his approval or for his rejection.

Mr Hatton: Without reference to the employer.

Mr SMITH: You are giving the employer the right. I would be prepared to negotiate on that, but you are giving the employer the right to put up proposals on the code of practice without reference to the employees, and that is as bad. If the government is prepared to bend a little, we will bend a little on this, but the principle of employee involvement in the development of codes of practice is an important one and it is a shame and a disgrace that this government has not recognised it.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, this sort of nonsense from people like the members of the opposition gets right up my nose. The employer has the statutory duty of care. The employer has to pay all the bills and wear the responsibility for whatever happens in that work place. He has a fundamental statutory obligation to provide a safe work place. There are provisions to provide codes of practice. To have a bunch of union officials go to the government or to the bureaucracy, behind the employer's back, and dub a code

of practice on how the employer should carry out his business is anathema to me.

If the union puts representations and arguments forward to the employer and negotiates a code of practice, as it can and does, that is fair enough. But no way in the world would I allow a situation where someone like Peter Tullgren could walk into the Work Health Authority, with his draft code of practice pulled out of the Victorian government somewhere, drop it on the government's desk, con a couple of public servants and have it imposed on metal trades employees at Winnellie. That is not on. This proposed amendment would enable that to happen as far as I am concerned.

The employer has all the obligations under this legislation and it provides rights for employees. The employees have the right to a safe working place but they have no right to run their employer's business. The employer's obligation is to provide a safe work place, and this is part of the mechanism by which he satisfies his obligations.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I think that that was a straight appeal to the Peko Wallsend lobby via the press gallery. It was an attempt to throw in a bit of New Right philosophy: the denial of 1 of the hallmarks of the development of industrial relations over the last few years which has been the involvement of unions on issues such as health and safety. I have dealt with the person that the Chief Minister was denigrating a couple of moments ago, and I do not believe that the Chief Minister should drag people's names before this Assembly when he does not have the gumption to take them on outside. He comes in here and denigrates people.

The Chief Minister should be attempting to involve the various parties in the industrial relations scene in the development of decent codes of practice. The Chief Minister is putting on an act here. The basic point we are making is eminently reasonable. We are asking that the unions be able to put in a draft to the minister. It has nothing to do with the ridiculous assertion that 1 particular official that the Chief Minister chose to name would go in and con a couple of public servants and a draft would then be imposed and become a code of practice. It would be far easier to con the ministers, if the general standard opposite is anything to go by, Mr Chairman.

The point that we are making is that, very obviously, it is a draft proposal. We are asking that the unions, as people with experience in this area, be involved in the process of preparing draft proposals and submit them to the minister for discussion. Obviously, the minister would discuss such proposals with the employers, as I would hope that he would discuss the employers' proposals with the employees. I would hope that he would also discuss them with the unions because they have experience in this matter.

It is not necessary to say that somehow they will con a couple of public servants and suddenly a draft will become law without the employers having a chance to have a say about it. That is absolutely ridiculous. It is a simple matter of ensuring that we obtain the best possible codes of practice and that we involve as many people as possible in the whole process to achieve that end.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the member for Stuart really ought to sit down and shut up. He would do himself a favour. He does not have a clue what he is talking about. He has totally distorted everything I have said.

Mr Ede: 'Con a couple of public servants', you said.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, he ought to sit down and read the amendment. It does not provide any reference to the employer whatsoever. The development of a code of practice that is specific to the process of a particular work place could - and, in many cases, I support the view that it should - involve the participation of the workers or their representatives. I have no problems with that. However, the employer has overall control of the process and any codes covered by subclause 47(4) would need to be submitted by the employer. I repeat the fundamental point: it is the employer who has the obligation. Will the opposition suggest that, if the unions or the employees want equal rights in the establishment of the codes of practice, they will accept equal statutory responsibility for their injuries? The answer to that is no. That is because this legislation is designed to protect and compensate employees and it imposes a very fundamental and broad statutory duty of care on the employer. This is part of the mechanism to ensure that the employer is exercising his statutory duty of care.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, under the provisions the employee has a statutory duty of care too. For example, under clause 57, compensation is not payable in respect of an injury to a worker that was deliberately self-inflicted or that was attributable to his serious and wilful misconduct. That is his statutory obligation under the bill.

We happen to be living in the 20th century and it has been accepted for a very long time indeed that employees have a right and proper role to play in the development of health and safety procedures in the work place.

Mr HATTON: Let them sort that out in the industrial relations environment.

Mr SMITH: Let them sort it out in the industrial relations environment? This legislation is supposed to set up a proper industrial relations environment for occupational health and safety and it fails dismally to do that. In the development of these codes, which will affect the everyday working conditions of employees, no opportunity is provided for any input from them at all. The government is prepared to rest on its case that it is a statutory obligation for the employer to do it. But, as I said, that is not good enough. It is an accepted principle in most Australian states by now that employees have the right, and perhaps they even have the obligation, to be involved in the development of appropriate codes of safety for their own benefit, for the employers' benefit and for the efficient and safe conduct of business in particular work places.

Mr Chairman, this is probably the most retrograde step in the whole legislation. It fails to recognise the basic right that employees have to be involved in the development of their own health and safety conditions.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 47 agreed to.

Clause 48 agreed to.

Clause 49:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 94.21 to 94.25.

Mr Chairman, these amendments are so complicated that you need to be a parliamentary draftsman to understand them. I thank the parliamentary draftsman who worked on them and hope he understood them.

Mr Chairman, the amendments attempt to broaden clause 49 to include in payments made to an injured worker payment for the overtime that he would have worked in the normal course of events. This relates to a situation where overtime is required by the terms of a worker's employment or is in practice a regular feature of his employment or is a practice prevailing generally in employment of a like nature and should be paid to him.

The reason why we have come to this position is that we all know that there are job situations where it is part of the conditions of employment that overtime be paid. The most striking example of that is the prison officers. As we all know, they have a very low base rate of pay and people are attracted to the positions because of the guaranteed overtime that is available. It is our view that it is unfair, in a situation where a prison officer is injured at work, as a result of being attacked by a prisoner or falling over the fence or whatever, that he should not be able to base his worker's compensation payments on what has in fact been his normal level of payments over the preceding years. That normal level of payments is his basic salary plus the overtime payments that have been made to him as part of his conditions of employment. Put simply, that is what we are trying to achieve through these amendments.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, we will be opposing these amendments. The argument in respect of the payment of overtime or non-working time, such as sick leave, maternity leave, bereavement leave, annual leave, long service leave etc, does not demonstrate that it is a part of the basic conditions of employment. I might say that, in many debates during the 1970s and early 1980s in respect of previous reviews of workmen's compensation legislation, the fundamental view has been that overtime should not be payable in terms of worker's compensation payments. It is not part of the basic contract of employment.

Mr Smith: For prison officers it is.

Mr HATTON: As such, it is not incorporated in direct payment for the normally-contracted hours of work. It is payment because an employee has worked extra hours. By definition, it is over the time of the basic contract. That is what overtime means.

Similar arguments apply in respect of night penalties and weekend penalties. If a person does not incur the penalty, he should not receive the payment. People receive these payments because of some disability they suffer. If they have to work at night, that disrupts their sleeping patterns and their biorhythms. Such matters are argued before the commission.

The Leader of the Opposition is now saying that these employees do not incur the disability but they want the money anyway because it is built into their lifestyle. I understand his basic argument but that payment is not part of the employee's normal weekly earnings as defined. If there were a particular discrepancy in 1 circumstance, there would be 100 discrepancies incurred the other way by the incorporation of overtime. We simply cannot support this or step away from a fundamental principle in all leave of absence payment circumstances.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the workers' compensation system recognises the right of people to have an income whilst they are injured which replaces, to some extent, the income they received before they were injured. For the average person, after 26 weeks it is 70% of his normal weekly earnings. What we are saying to prison officers, to use that example again, is that that will

not be 70% of their normal weekly earnings because their normal weekly earnings are made up of their low base salary plus overtime and other allowances. A prison officer who has been working for 25 years may now be earning \$38 000 a year yet his basic salary is \$23 000 or \$24 000 a year. He may have been receiving that for the last 20 to 25 years.

The problem is that he has established a lifestyle based on that \$38 000. Under this legislation as it stands, he will receive 70% of \$24 000. What this legislation is saying to this prison officer, who has 1 of the most difficult jobs in Australia, is that, if he were injured, he would receive less than half of what he had been earning. We have no problems at all with irregular overtime that is not a structured part of the employment agreement. In the case of prison officers, it is unjust not to include it for purposes of determining the amount they will receive if they are unfortunate enough to be injured.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, if I can extrapolate the Leader of the Opposition's argument, a used car salesman who is on a retainer plus commission should receive an average of his actual past earnings, including commissions.

He was suggesting that a prison officer's job was really grossly underpaid but that people were attracted to that form of employment because of overtime and penalty rates which boost the annual salary considerably. In my experience of the industrial relations system in Australia, I could not possibly comprehend a union, particularly a union of prison officers that at times can be quite militant, letting go any possible opportunity to argue before the Arbitration Commission or other tribunals. I am sure that, in the past, arbitration tribunals have looked at a prison officer's tasks and presumably allocated values for that sort of work. There must be prison officers who at least occasionally, if not regularly, work an ordinary day shift without incurring penalties. In that case, they are paid the basic salary for that week. To propose that, because a man works regular overtime, he should be compensated for it when he is off sick is simply not on. If a person is working what are called anti-social hours, he is paid extra because the boss should not be working him during those hours. If he is off sick and is not working those hours, obviously he should not be remunerated for them.

Amendments negated.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 94.26 and 94.27.

This is an attempt to widen the existing clause. It inserts the following in subclause (2): 'and any other payment made in pursuance of an industrial award or in accordance with the normal employment practice in or at any industry, trade, profession, occupation, location or work place'. It is a recognition that, although the government has identified a number of existing awards and allowances that will be counted as allowances, in the future there may well be other awards and allowances that are struck by industrial tribunals and they should be considered under this clause.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I must refer again to the considerable confusion surrounding this clause and the definitions that were eventually arrived at under the existing workmen's compensation legislation in several reviews in the 1970s when these issues were also argued.

These sorts of payments should not include things like dirt money, height money, heat money, cold money - the one-off types of payments or allowances.

The allowances referred to in this clause are those that are normally paid for the normal work, not the extraneous payments.

Mr Smith: What is the industry allowance if it is not a height allowance or dirt money?

Mr HATTON: An industry allowance is something like a construction industry allowance in the Northern Territory Building and Construction Industry Award. It is designed to take into account payments normally made as part of the remuneration for a normal week's work of an employee in a particular industry under an award.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am not completely au fait with all of these terms. I was wondering whether a leading hand allowance would, for example, include the special allowance the Chief Minister receives as Chief Minister.

Mr HATTON: Yes, Mr Chairman, it would.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, a substantial proportion of the income of the majority of my constituents is derived from so-called fringe benefits including subsidised accommodation, air fare allowances and electricity allowances. Similar subsidies apply in other remote communities such as Groote Eylandt and Jabiru. I believe public servants have some benefits over and above those enjoyed by the normal population. I do not believe that such matters are covered by existing subclause (2).

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, those non-cash benefits are not included in the calculation of ordinary weekly payments. I can only say that they have never been taken into account in the calculation of workmen's compensation payments. I think I am correct in saying that this is a direct copy of the clause in the existing workers' compensation legislation.

Given the importance of those benefits, I have been quite surprised by the member for Nhulunbuy's relative silence on the imposition of the fringe benefits tax which obviously will cause some serious concern in respect of employment prospects with Nabalco, the major employer in Nhulunbuy. I would have thought that he would have been far more vocal in opposition to the fringe benefits tax being imposed on either the employer or employee because of the potential risk it has for his own constituents.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I do not mind participating in a fringe benefits tax debate as it applies to Nhulunbuy. I do not mind telling the Chief Minister that, because of my representations and the representations of a number of other people in mining communities throughout Australia, we have managed to achieve a far better tax profile on behalf of the employers than, unfortunately, the Chief Minister has been able to achieve in Darwin. I think he will find that the tax payable by employers in those remote communities is substantially less than the tax payable by employers in less remote places.

I do not mind participating in that debate if the Chief Minister wishes it. He has answered my specific question. This clause reflects a change to the amount that an injured person will receive in workmen's compensation.

Mr Hatton: It is taken from the existing act.

Mr LEO: It is taken from the existing act, but the calculation as to how much an injured person will receive in workmen's compensation ...

Mr Hatton: It is higher.

Mr LEO: For instance, there has been a change as to whether or not there should be a cash payment for permanent impairment or, indeed, other matters. I know it is in another clause, but the calculations are made in respect of subclause (2) as I understand it.

Amendments negatived.

Clause 49 agreed to.

Clauses 50 to 52 agreed to.

Clause 53:

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 95.1

The government proposes that this clause be amended by omitting the words 'to the worker or his dependants' and inserting instead 'by his employer to the worker or the worker's dependants'. The effect is to make it clear that the benefits payable under this clause are payable by the employer. This is consistent with other similar provisions in the bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 53, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 54 to 59 agreed to.

Clause 60:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.28.

This is a pretty difficult one, and I know that it is also somewhat controversial. We have no problems at all with subclause 60(1) which says, basically, that a worker is not entitled to compensation in respect of an injury sustained in travelling after having consumed alcoholic liquor where the consumption of that liquor materially contributed - that word again - to the accident giving rise to the injury. However, we do have a problem with subclause 60(2) which, in fact, reverses the onus and presumes that, if a worker has a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08 or more, whilst he may not necessarily have caused the accident ...

Mr Hatton: Materially contributed to.

Mr SMITH: ... he has to prove the contrary. The Chief Minister has pointed out that 'materially contributed' are the appropriate words.

Mr Chairman, the clause causes us concern, not specifically because of what it says, but because of its effect. We are looking at a situation where an employee has a few beers, is over 0.08, and whilst driving home materially contributes to an accident. If he dies, this provision presents no problem because the nominal lump sum compensation will go to his family. However, if he does not die but is badly injured and cannot work for the rest of his life, the family will receive nothing.

It is not the individual that I am particularly concerned about. Obviously, he or she has made his or her own decision about drinking and

driving although it might be debatable whether an alcoholic makes his own decisions on that. However, for this purpose, let us forget the individual. I am concerned about the impact that subclause (2) will have on the family of such a person. As I have said, the effect on the family is that, if the person is involved in an accident, the onus is on him to prove that he did not materially contribute to that accident. That is always a difficult proposition and, if he fails to do that, the family will receive nothing. There will be no first 26 weeks payment of normal weekly earnings. The family will not receive 70% of normal weekly earnings if it is a post 26th week matter. It will not receive rehabilitation expenses which could be quite considerable in car accident cases. The family will receive nothing, and I believe that that is an unfair penalty to place on the family.

Members opposite will argue that subclause 60(1) provides for that, and I accept that. But the difference is that subclause 60(2) is much tougher than subclause 60(1). Subclause 60(1) says that where a person has consumed alcohol, and the consumption of that alcohol materially contributed to the accident, he shall not receive the benefits. Subclause 60(2) assumes that he is guilty and reverses the onus of proof. That is what we object to. In the situation where a worker has a family, we believe that the government or the appropriate authority should have the responsibility of proving that the worker was affected by alcohol and that that had materially contributed to the accident. That is why we have moved this amendment.

Mr FIRMIN: Mr Chairman, this is an emotional argument. It brings the plight of families into this situation. That subclause was considered very carefully in that regard. The Motor Accidents Compensation Act contains the same provision and the same problem arises in that persons injured whilst driving with a blood alcohol concentration in excess of 0.08 have no claim under that act. This subclause was included to ensure that this legislation would be consistent with the provisions of the Motor Accident Compensation Act. The government opposes the amendment.

Mr LEO: I appreciate what the member for Ludmilla said about the relationship between the Motor Accidents Compensation Act and the Motor Vehicles Act as they relate to drink driving. It is a very dangerous practice and nobody would deny that. However, I have always assumed that work health legislation had more of a social nature than a strictly legal nature. It relates to compensation for people who are injured at work or when travelling to or from work. I have never thought of it as penal legislation. I do not believe that it is appropriate that this type of legislation should contain criminal provisions.

Mr Chairman, the difficulty that we have with this subclause was pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition. If a person dies, as a consequence of drinking too much alcohol on his way to work or coming home from work, his family will accrue some pecuniary benefit. Compensation will be paid to replace some part of income lost. However, if the person sustains permanent injury that prevents him from working, his family will live without any hope of compensation for the rest of their natural lives.

Mr Chairman, take the example of a truck driver. If convicted of drink driving under the Motor Vehicles Act, he would lose his licence and receive a fine or possibly be sent to jail. In addition to that penalty, he would lose his means of livelihood. If he were injured under those circumstances, he would receive no compensation under the Motor Accidents Compensation Act nor under the Workers' Compensation Act. Thus, the person would be thrice penalised for the 1 offence. I think that that would be extremely unfortunate



for that individual and I believe that subclause 60(2) would reflect the attitudes of the community more fairly if the onus of proof were on the tribunal to determine whether or not the person's medical state contributed to the accident as against the individual involved in the accident having to prove that alcohol was not a contributing factor.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I find it rather grotesque that a person could be as drunk as a lord and have an accident and a \$70 000 payout would be made whereas a person with a 0.08 blood alcohol content who had an accident and went into a coma would not receive anything. The coma would prevent the person from arguing the case that he was not responsible for the accident although the onus of proof would be on him to do so. Such a person would receive no benefits under the legislation as it now stands. It is not rare for people to go into comas after accidents. Subclause (2) should be omitted. I am sure that there would be situations other than the one I have described where persons would not have the opportunity to prove that the alcohol they had consumed did not contribute materially to the accident and as a result they would be unjustly deprived of compensation.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the rights to benefits of a person travelling to and from work can be protected by the very simple expedient of not drinking and driving. If a person chooses to drink and drive and risks not only his own life but the lives of other people in the community, I do not have any sympathy for him. This legislation is consistent with the Motor Accidents Compensation Act. We need to have consistency in the law.

The member for Nhulunbuy raised the issue of whether this is social legislation or whether it is compensation for something that has arisen in the work place. That philosophical argument has been going on for a number of years and it will probably continue for many more. If one took the logical extension of the social legislation approach, one could argue that employers should not have to pay for it but that it should be paid for by the government. If it is social legislation, the community provides a support system to cover questions of fault and no-fault and injury to other persons. The general community support system is reflected through many social security payments. Whether one thinks they are sufficient or not is a different question.

This clause refers to specific payments under specific circumstances associated with work. The matter of being covered by workers' compensation for travel to and from work is controversial in itself. Some people ask how and why the employer should bear the cost of that particular risk. The argument advanced in favour is that employees would not be travelling if they did not have employment. If a person decides to divert from his journey on the way to or from work, he is considered to be taking part in his own social life. If a person stops at a pub on his way home from work and exceeds 0.08, it can be argued that he has broken his work journey and therefore should not be entitled to worker's compensation.

There are arguments in the courts continually about such circumstances and they are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The 1 consistent aspect is that, if the employee materially adds to the risk of injury by breaking his journey or by having a 0.08 blood alcohol concentration, the law says that no workers' compensation will apply. I appreciate the dilemma that honourable members are referring to in respect of the family but that could apply in situations unrelated to this legislation. We must insist that this subclause remain in the legislation because people driving under such circumstances are potential murderers.

Mr LEO: I concur with everything the Chief Minister has said. However, he would be aware that there are persons who are employed under very peculiar circumstances. For instance, if a person in my community does not accept a call-out when there is a breakdown of some vital piece of equipment, his employment may be jeopardised. That person may or may not have been consuming alcohol up to 30 minutes before he was called out. He could be called out at 3 o'clock in the morning. I imagine the same thing would apply to the employees at the Stokes Hill Power-station.

Mr Hatton: They can use taxis.

Mr LEO: I am afraid that taxis are not always available. If there is a major breakdown, the call-out vehicle does not always work either and people use their own cars. These people have not broken their journey home and they have not stopped at the boozier on their way home. They may have been consuming alcohol at home. The effects of alcohol are variable, particularly in relation to a person's physical condition when drinking. For example, a small amount of alcohol may markedly affect a person who has had very little sleep as a result of attending a work call-out. Where an accident occurs, I believe it is onerous that the employee has to prove that his physical state did not contribute to the accident. It is unreasonable.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, as honourable members are aware, this clause reflects the provisions in the Motor Accidents Compensation Act. Indeed, I think the Motor Accidents Compensation Act might go a bit further in that, if it is demonstrated that the person was drunk at the time of the accident, the TIO can pursue him and his assets to recover moneys that it may have paid out to third parties. If we omit this subclause, we will have a situation whereby a driver who is driving to work will be able to take advantage of a situation in relation to blood alcohol content which is different from that of a person who is simply driving. Such an inconsistency between this legislation and the Motor Accidents Compensation Act would be quite intolerable.

Mr HATTON: There has been some mention of having to prove this matter beyond reasonable doubt. I am advised that the burden of proof in these circumstances relates to the balance of probabilities rather than the more severe onus to prove beyond a reasonable doubt. The balance of probabilities argument applies in respect of whether or not the consumption of alcoholic liquor materially contributed to the accident.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have the MACA legislation in front of me and I seek clarification rather than anything else at this stage. Section 9 excludes persons committing offences from entitlement to certain benefits. A person is not entitled to a benefit referred to in sections 13 and 17 in respect of an injury received in or as a result of an accident that occurred while the person was driving under the influence of alcohol. It goes on to detail the 0.08 provision.

Section 13 deals with compensation for loss of earning capacity and section 17 deals with compensation for loss of a limb. It says that a person cannot be reimbursed for loss of earning capacity or the loss of a limb if his blood alcohol level exceeded 0.08. If I am correct, there is still an inconsistency because, if the accident results in the death of the person, a death benefit is payable even though his blood alcohol level exceeded 0.08. What concerns me about clause 60 as it stands is that the person may be badly injured but the family will not have any income. In addition, it will have the expense of providing for the person's rehabilitation. Perhaps we could defer further consideration of this clause until we have sought expert advice

on the provisions of the Motor Accidents Compensation Act and whether we should amend this legislation to bring it in line.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, it seems as though, if the opposition had its way, the dear old employer would be hit again. The employer is the party required to pay the insurance premiums. In fact, since it is a benefit to the employee, I wonder whether Mr Keating would slap a fringe benefits tax on it if he thought about it. He is silly enough to. We must make it very clear to the public that they should not engage in practices that could lead to the dire situations which have been mentioned here. It is no longer merely a question of a few convivial beers resulting in the 0.08 limit being exceeded because there are other drugs that are becoming more prolific in the community and these also may contribute to accidents. I believe that statistics are being gathered on this. I believe that the employer should not have to bear the burden of increased premiums.

The behaviour of an employee between leaving work and going home has to be such that it does not jeopardise the welfare of the family. The family should be made aware of this and it should stress the importance of it to the employee who may infringe and lose all benefits.

Further consideration of clause 60 postponed.

Clauses 61 and 62 agreed to.

Clause 63:

Mr SMITH: I move amendment 94.30.

This is a simple amendment to increase the prescribed childrens' benefits by increasing the amount paid for the first child from 7% to 10%. Sound economic studies indicate that the cost of a first child is always higher than the cost of other children. The average weekly cost of supporting a first child in Australia is about \$50 and that figure is much higher if the child is a teenager. At present, the benefit level is 7% of average weekly earnings. That works out at about \$28 or \$30. What we are proposing does not involve a vast amount of money. The difference between 7% and 10% is about \$12. It is a recognition that children are expensive to raise and that they should not be disadvantaged through the death of the breadwinner in the family. At this stage, we are talking about the children's benefits in the event of lump sum compensation in respect of death.

I believe that our amendment is entirely appropriate. We have based it on the existing provision in Victoria whereby the benefit is 10% for the first child and 7% for succeeding children up to a maximum of 10 children in the family. Without having consulted my colleagues, I would be prepared to look at reducing the maximum number of children down to 9 or 8. That would save some money because I do not think there are too many families these days which have 10 children under the age of 16. In fact, I cannot think of any off the top of my head. Perhaps there may be room for a trade-off there.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the argument is really about providing more money to people. The simple effect of the amendment would be to increase the cost of 1 particular area without any suggestion of offsets.

Mr Smith: I just gave you one.

Mr HATTON: It conflicts with the philosophy applying in respect of some Commonwealth benefits which says that sliding scales should benefit larger rather than smaller families. Additionally, the rate of 7% of average weekly earnings equates with the children's benefit payable on the death of a worker under current legislation. We do not support the amendment. I suspect we are likely to have a number of these arguments. Let me say at the outset that we have examined carefully all the percentages and costs in the bill and an actuarial assessment indicates that they are very tight. We will not be supporting any increase in any benefits under the legislation.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 63 agreed to.

Clause 64 agreed to.

Clause 65:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.32.

The purpose of this amendment is to provide an incentive for partially incapacitated people to return to work. If they earn less than 75% of their normal earnings, it will provide for a top up to 75% of their normal weekly earnings. If they choose not to return to work or are unable to go to work, they will receive only 70%. If we increase the level that a partially incapacitated person can earn from 70% to 75%, that will provide a definite incentive for him to return to the work force and it will result in offsets to the cost of the work health system.

Mr FIRMIN: Mr Chairman, I do not disagree with the principle that the Leader of the Opposition is espousing. However, the bill provides for an offset arrangement and an inducement to return to work. A man who normally earns \$300 a week would be receiving \$210 a week. If he went back to work temporarily, under the existing bill he would receive more than he would if the amendment increasing the percentage from 70% to 75% were agreed to. This is because he is entitled to earn additional amounts for temporary work or partial work and the difference between his original salary and the temporary work. With this amendment, he would receive \$210. However, he is entitled under this bill to earn an additional 70% of the balance between his original earnings and any temporary amounts that he receives. Because the difference in this case is \$100, he is entitled to earn an extra \$70 which he can add to the original basic amount of \$210. In fact, he can earn \$280 a week. Thus, the incentive is better under the clause as it stands. Also, the amendment would add to the cost of the scheme.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, as the member for Ludmilla has indicated, there is already a considerable incentive built into the scheme for the employee to return to work. To increase the figures would merely add to the total cost of the scheme with no definitive benefit.

Amendment negatived.

Mr SMITH: I move amendment 94.33.

The effect of this amendment would be to provide benefits for children similar to the benefits provided to children in the death benefits subdivision. In other words, it allows 7% for each child that the injured worker has. With a 7.2% increase due shortly, under the present legislation,

after the first 26 weeks of injury an injured person is entitled to a basic rate of \$197, \$50 for a spouse, and another \$50 for 2 children, giving him a grand total of \$297. That system is to be replaced by a flat rate of 70% of normal weekly earnings.

The problem is that \$297 could be received by an injured person who has a wife and 2 children at present. Under the new scheme, he would have to earn \$420 per week gross in order to receive \$297. \$420 is very close to average weekly earnings. The actuaries' report reveals that about 80% of people involved in workers' compensation cases earn less than average weekly earnings. What we are saying is that a person with a spouse and 2 children will be worse off under this scheme if he was earning less than the average weekly wage, and most of these people do earn less than that. I accept that, under the new arrangements, people on higher incomes will be better off than previously but I am concerned about the lower-income earners.

Mr Chairman, a significant percentage of people will be worse off and I will try to give a couple of examples of what I am talking about. A person on \$300 per week who has a wife and 2 children would receive \$297 under the old system. Under the new system, he would receive 70% of \$300 which is \$210. However, because that is below 50% of average weekly earnings, that would be bumped up to \$220. That person would be \$77 worse off under the new scheme after 26 weeks.

To give another example, a person earning \$420 a week who has a spouse and 2 children would receive \$308. He would be a little better off under the present system. There is a big gap between \$300 and \$420. All such people who earn between \$300 and \$420 will be worse off. According to the actuaries' report, most of the injured people fall into that category. In reality, only a small percentage of those people have a spouse and 2 children. Indeed, the number of people who are injured at work who have spouses and children is surprisingly small. However, a significant number of people will be worse off.

The other significant point is that the poverty line is currently \$254, as has been demonstrated by Professor Anderson of Melbourne University's Economic Research Institute. Under the present scheme, the benefits that we pay to low-income families puts people above the poverty line. Under the new scheme, the benefits that we will pay to low-income families will put people below the poverty line.

I take cognisance of the fact that the Chief Minister has said there can be no increases in benefits without offsets. I have no offsets to suggest in this area but, as a matter of simple justice and in order to ensure that people who are unfortunate enough to be injured are given at least the dignity of sufficient money to enable them to live above the poverty line, we must increase this benefit to a reasonable level. The way I propose that it be changed is by the introduction of a children's benefit. It is not an exceptionally large children's benefit; it is a children's benefit that is already in place where a person dies in a work-related accident.

Mr Chairman, I do not think that that is too much to ask. Surely a basic principle in workers' compensation is that sufficient money be provided for the injured worker and his family to live with some dignity for the rest their lives if the worker is unable to return to work. To do anything less would be to sell ourselves short as a caring society, and I think all of us would like to think that we are part of a caring society. This clause of the bill falls short of that. In my view, this is by far the most significant of the

opposition's amendments and I would ask the government to consider what I have said very seriously.

Mr FIRMIN: Mr Chairman, the government considered all these options in respect of the Work Health Bill. As I said in the second-reading debate, some 2½ years were spent deliberating and suggestions from many different people were given consideration. I do not have a copy of the actual report here, and I cannot remember the particular section referred to that set out that a large proportion of workers would be affected to such an extent that they ...

Mr Smith: But it doesn't say that.

Mr FIRMIN: ... would be dropping below the poverty line with respect to ...

Mr Smith: The actuaries' report was based on 80%. You know that. You know it has been cut back to 70% since the actuaries' report was made. Don't try to mislead us; get your facts straight.

Mr FIRMIN: I am not trying to mislead you. What I am saying is that it does not set that out and the examples that you gave ...

Mr Smith: Show me where I am wrong.

Mr FIRMIN: I cannot work that out at the moment because I do not have the figures in front of me.

Mr Smith: I ran this argument in the second-reading debate as well. You have no excuse for that. It is a disgraceful performance.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr FIRMIN: Mr Chairman, as was mentioned earlier, the bill is intended to provide a work health act which will cover a wide range of options. The basic underlying intention of the bill is to increase the benefits across the board. This has been done in many areas, in some instances by up to 18%. Coverage to all workers has been increased by approximately 10% and, as I said before, I am yet to be convinced that we have failed to address the long-term benefit and that people will be below the poverty line. The calculations I made on other sections of the legislation do not show that to be the case at all. We have made some other fundamental changes but, by and large, the legislation will provide a wider range of benefits and will be a significant improvement on the existing act.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the member for Ludmilla suggested that the government be congratulated because, in this particular case, the amendment to which the Leader of the Opposition has spoken so cogently provides a wide range of options. During debate on the previous amendment, the government put forward certain figures that suggested it was encouraging people to return to the work force. Let us bear in mind that the figures involved leave people in circumstances which may be comfortable for people who do not have dependants. However, there is no doubt in my mind that this particular amendment should be accepted so that a prescribed children's benefit can be included in cases of long-term incapacity.

Let us look at the figures that the member for Ludmilla trotted out earlier. He referred to somebody whose average weekly wage was \$300 per week. However, if that person's wage happened to be \$200, his benefit in respect of

long-term incapacity would be \$270. Given the cost involved in raising a family today, I find it fairly difficult to accept that the government is prepared to knock back the constructive amendment that has been moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, it is all very well for opposition members, in good faith, to look at legislation such as this clause by clause and say that life would be really tough if people were in such and such a position and therefore the benefits should be increased by a few dollars here and there. There is no doubt that some people may find themselves in circumstances whereby an amendment such as this may be of benefit to them in due course. However, legislation such as this must be viewed in a certain light. The Motor Accidents Compensation Act is really no different from this legislation in that a balance is being struck between what the community deems as appropriate compensation for injured workers or persons injured in motor accidents and the likely costs of those schemes, whether they are a cost to the taxpayer or, as in this case, a cost to those who pay the workers' compensation premiums. In the last resort, of course, the cost is passed on to the consumer. We are all paying for these schemes and the more attractive we make the benefits, the more expensive the schemes become.

In answer to the argument that we cannot let such legislation pass through the Assembly because a person on \$300 a week would be in a terrible plight without extra benefits for his children, what about the people who fall off ladders in their own homes and receive absolutely no compensation? One could easily become a quadriplegic as a result of falling off the roof of one's house. Presumably such people would have to depend on the social security system if they did not have insurance against such injury.

There may be other people who are part-time employees on about \$60 a week. If they were injured at work, presumably they would receive 70% of \$60. One could say that nobody could possibly live on that and that he would receive more than that through the dole. However, there are people in the community who receive \$60 as their ordinary weekly remuneration. And there are people out there who are quite happy with \$60 a week.

Before opposition members come in here and assert that the government has no heart, they should reflect that there will always be a category of people who will complain no matter what percentage is decided upon. Unless the compensation is set at 100% of earnings forever, some people will complain. There will always be some people who will have an income that is below the poverty line. There is no question about that. The dole is below the poverty line, isn't it? There are some 700 000 Australians out there living on it somehow, mate.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, that was a most ridiculous contribution. It is quite obvious that the member for Fannie Bay has absolutely no appreciation of what this bill is about. He has no appreciation of workers' compensation. We are talking about workers and he is talking about people falling off ladders in their own homes. We are talking about workers who happen to be on low wages and who will be condemned to a life of poverty because of the provisions contained in this bill. That is not good enough. It is all right for the member, on his salary, to have provisions whereby he will do all right out of this deal but, as soon as it comes to people who are on lower wages, he wants to condemn them to a life of poverty. It is just not good enough.

Let us have a look at the figures. I have the actuaries' reports here. 270 men were in the sample that was taken, of whom 92 were married and only 56

had children - there were 118 children in all. The average wage was \$332.44. If they were all at the very lowest end of the wage scale, the total cost to the scheme could be \$200 000 per year but, in fact, these wages would vary. It is not an enormous amount that we are asking for on the basis of the actuaries' provisions, but it is a principle that we should not be condemning people to live below that poverty line because they earn low salaries and have children.

It is possible to increase those levels without great additional cost. It is necessary to focus on the group that will be condemned to a life of poverty if the legislation remains in its existing form. I hope that this is not a deliberate move on the part of the government. The member for Ludmilla admitted that he did not understand what we were talking about and had not done his sums. It is quite possible that this slipped through into the bill without the government actually intending it to be there. If that is the case, fair enough. We are not going to rub the government's nose in it. Let it acknowledge that this system will look after those who, admittedly, are a minority. However, the people who will suffer as a result of this legislation will not be interested in their minority status. They will be cognisant of their suffering and of the fact that they have been condemned by this legislation to live well below the poverty line. That is something that we cannot accept.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, let me make another attempt. According to the actuaries' report, the average male wage of the persons on workers' compensation was around \$332. Under the present system, if a person on that wage had a wife and 2 kids, with the 7.2% increase that is about to come in, he would receive \$297 per week. Under the system this bill proposes, he would receive \$220 per week or \$77 less than under the existing system. That is what we are talking about. The government must not introduce a work health system that will disadvantage low-income earners by depriving them of \$77 per week. That is a 25% reduction. I ask the Chief Minister to think about it. The problem is there. He should convince me if I am wrong but he must not ignore the problem. As it stands at present, it is disgraceful because it will condemn people to a life of penury. They will not be able to live on \$220. That injured worker, his spouse and his 2 kids will be living on the breadline. He will know that, if his injury had occurred before this legislation came into operation, he would be receiving \$77 a week more. That is the problem and that is why we have moved this amendment.

Mr LEO: Obviously, it is a fruitless exercise to try to get the government to address these matters rationally, let alone humanely. I can predict something that will result from this legislation. It might take a couple of years to occur, but I can assure members opposite that if the unions come to regard this legislation as not being worth the paper that it is printed on, the result will be industrial disputation. They will dispute with the employers until they have their own work health clauses within their own awards.

The Chief Minister has been saying that the average recipient will be better off under this legislation than he is under the present Workers' Compensation Act. The Leader of the Opposition has pointed out that a certain category of recipients will be some \$70 a week worse off. If the Chief Minister will not answer that, it must beg that question of whether or not workers will be better off under this legislation than they are under the present Worker's Compensation Act. It would also indicate that the Chief Minister is not being truthful about this particular matter, and one would then have to ask how much more of this bill he is being less than candid



about. I ask the Chief Minister, for the sake of his own credibility if nothing else, to address the very serious questions that the Leader of the Opposition has raised.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I have been referring to my speech closing the second-reading debate on this bill. What I said then was that 75% of workers will be better off. We reduced the benefit from 80% to 70%. We did this knowing that some low-income workers with large families could be worse off. That was recognised. Even though there should be relatively few of those, given the profile of the average injured worker, we gave the matter considerable attention and the exercise proved to be very difficult. We considered using the method now proposed by the opposition; that is, providing a children's benefit. However, this would have had the effect of passing on increased benefits to all claimants, including those about whom the opposition is not concerned.

Such benefits would also increase the overall cost of the scheme by an estimated 2%. I made the point last night that the opposition had not indicated any areas where we could offset such an additional cost. That is what we have been trying to wrestle with. The community simply cannot afford to spend more money on this scheme. If we want to put something extra into 1 area, we have to take off something somewhere else. We have been saying that for months. We have wrestled with the problem the Leader of the Opposition has raised, and we cannot find an answer. His solution would not benefit only the specific group to which he refers. It would flow through the whole scheme and have considerable impact on its cost. 75% of people will be better off under this scheme. I refer not only to the weekly benefit that they will receive but also to the medical and other benefits that will be available to them. We have to look at the total costs and how we can arrive at a balance that will keep those costs within reason.

There will be a Ministerial Advisory Council which will be assessing the implementation of this legislation. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to find a way to solve the problem and to offset the costs elsewhere. We all accept that it is a balancing act. We cannot find a solution to the problem that the Leader of the Opposition has raised even though we have investigated the matter thoroughly. It is a fact that some people will be worse off under this legislation but the vast majority of people will be better off. If there is to be an increase in the benefits here, benefits elsewhere will have to be decreased. We cannot keep on increasing benefits because eventually the community will go broke.

Mr EDE: The Chief Minister has just said that he has achieved this balancing act at the expense of the lowest-paid people. The 25% at the bottom will be worse off and the other 75% will be better off. That will be the effect of his legislation.

Mr Hatton: What is the percentage of people involved?

Mr EDE: There are 2 possibilities. If he has been unable to arrive at a solution and this is an unintended consequence, he should defer this until a solution has been found. On the other hand, if this is being done deliberately in order to balance the books, it is being done at the expense of the people at the bottom of the pile. The government has the numbers to ram this through tonight, but we will get out there and see what the public thinks of this legislation. I am horrified; I think it is disgusting. If the Chief Minister cannot work out his own solution, he should at least use ours in the interim. It will not cost a fortune. The advisory council should seek a solution and the poorest people should not have to pay the price.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, in 1 real sense, the Chief Minister's reputation is on the line tonight. He has developed a reputation as being a caring and responsible member of this community. I must say that people have appreciated this after some of the antics of previous Chief Ministers. They see Steve Hatton, if I could use his name for a moment, as a nice man and a good bloke, a bloke who has a concern for the average Territorian. However, he is coming within an ace of blowing that regard by his attitude on this matter.

He is asking the poorest 25% of people on workers' compensation to pay for increased benefits for the 75% who are above them. He is asking an average bloke, his wife and 2 kids to accept a drop of 25% in their disposable income. He is expecting us to sit here and accept it and to accept his ridiculous argument that the scheme cannot afford an alternative. There is a more basic principle at stake than whether the scheme can afford it or not. That principle is whether the scheme is just and fair! It is not just and fair because the people who can least afford to have a reduction in their income will be the hardest hit under this new u-beaut scheme that the government has somehow managed to come up with. It has taken it 2½ years to do this and it will be done at the expense of people at the bottom of the pile, the people who can least fight back, the people whom he and his government are condemning to life on the breadline. They will certainly be below the bread and margarine line. On \$220 a week, all they will be able to afford is bread.

We are not talking about everybody who is earning less than the average weekly earnings of \$330. We are talking about people with children, the people whom everybody in this Assembly is so concerned about. The Minister for Education wants to them to go to university here, and we support that even though we have some differences of opinion as to where the university should be located. The Minister for Health wants them to grow up to be strong and healthy Territorians. The Minister for Business, Technology and Communications is trying to find them jobs in the Trade Development Zone. What the Chief Minister is doing with this legislation will make it damned difficult for any children whose parents are in those circumstances to do anything but stay alive. An injured worker with a wife and 2 kids would find it almost impossible to continue living in the Territory because of the high rents and the high cost of food here. In fact, it would be damned difficult for them to live a reasonable life anywhere. It is time that the government came to its senses and accepted our amendments or at least deferred the legislation until it can arrive at a solution to the problem.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I suspect that about 90% of what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is absolute garbage. However, I cannot manipulate my way through a multitude of figures and exaggerations now. I move that further consideration of this clause be postponed until we can get to the bottom of what he is on about, whom we are talking about and how many people are involved.

Further consideration of clause 65 postponed.

Clause 66:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.35.

This clause deals with compensation for people who work in a voluntary capacity for the Northern Territory at any particular time. The obvious sorts of situations relate to such occurrences as bushfires and cyclones. If such people are unfortunate enough to be injured, what compensation should they be paid? Clause 66 provides that they should be paid as prescribed. Obviously,

that means that they would be paid according to the regulations. It is our view that this matter should be dealt with in the act rather than in the regulations. Because these voluntary workers are working for the government, at least they should be entitled to the 50% of average weekly earnings which is the minimum that applies right throughout the bill.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the government supports this amendment.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, it has been very difficult to determine where I could raise this point, and this seems to be the best time.

Today we passed some legislation which provided for 100% of average weekly earnings to be the amount that was specified. Throughout this act, the figure of 50% applies. In the other piece of legislation, we determined that certain workers will receive 100%. I refer to people working under community service orders. Can the government tell me why people working under community service orders will receive twice as much as other people?

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 66, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 67 to 70 agreed to.

Clause 71:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.36.

Mr Chairman, this is another example of reduction in benefits from what applies under the existing legislation. What we are talking about here is a lump sum compensation to people for injury. The present situation provides that the maximum amount of compensation shall be \$57 300. What is provided here is 104 times average weekly earnings which is \$46 000. In other words, the maximum that can be claimed has been reduced from \$57 000 to \$46 000, a reduction of 20%. I find it extremely difficult to understand the government's rationale in this regard. The situation will become even worse because, with the 7.2% increase that is due shortly, the present amount will be increased to \$61 000 and the gap will be \$15 000 or 25%. Our proposal is that the amount should be 156 times the average weekly earnings which is about \$68 000. This is a further example of how this bill reflects a weakening of benefits. In the first draft of the bill, the amount was \$75 000 and that has now been cut back by a third to \$46 000.

I want to make the point that not everybody who is injured will receive the maximum amount. The amount is based on the extent of incapacity. Indeed, in respect of minor injury, the person has to demonstrate 15% disability to receive any money whatsoever. We have some reservations about that but we have decided not to fly with them.

Our major reservation is that we are talking about people who will receive a lump sum of compensation for permanent and severe injury. Any injury that is assessed at 85% or more is regarded as 100%. To obtain that maximum benefit under the American guidelines that the scheme will operate under, the injured person will have to be very severely disabled indeed. He would have to be close to being confined to a wheelchair or something equally as serious. What we are saying to those people is that we have devalued the extent of their pain and suffering by 20%.

Mr Hatton: Do not mislead the Assembly.

Mr SMITH: I am not misleading the Assembly.

Mr Hatton: What about all the other benefits?

Mr SMITH: You will get your chance.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr SMITH: Again, we have a situation where the most disadvantaged people who come under the aegis of the legislation will be the ones who are hit most severely.

Mr Hatton: Wrong.

Mr SMITH: A couple of clauses ago, we were talking about the low-income earners being slugged and now we are talking about people who have severe and permanent disability being savaged by this legislation.

Mr Hatton: Rubbish! Prove it.

Mr SMITH: I have. \$61 000 down to \$46 000.

Mr Hatton: Are you comparing apples with apples?

Mr SMITH: Yes, I am comparing apples with apples.

Mr Hatton: Weekly benefits.

Mr SMITH: You are not going to talk about weekly benefits again, are you? I will give an example. The bloke on \$300 per week will receive \$220 under the new scheme and he will receive \$11 000 less if he is permanently and totally incapacitated. He has done really well, hasn't he? He will be smiling all the way to the bank. He will also be boasting about Steve Hatton, that kind, considerate bloke whom everybody thinks is a nice man. He will be spreading his name around the community for sure.

Mr Hatton: Sure will.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, it is inconceivable that the government could arrive at a decision like this that will take so much money away from the people most affected by work injuries. I urge the government to reconsider its attitude. It is inconceivable and incomprehensible that it should allow this to happen.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, we do not support the amendment. We believe the benefits provided are fair and reasonable under all the circumstances.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I want to register my concern and to support the Leader of the Opposition's comments. The committee has agreed to clause 62 which provides an amount equal to 156 times average weekly earnings for a death benefit. I find it fairly difficult to accept that, in the case where somebody will not work again, the benefit should be two-thirds of that amount - 104 times average weekly earnings. In the case of a worker with a spouse and 2 children who is killed in work-related circumstances, there is a fair possibility of the spouse marrying again and setting up a new family. Considering the circumstances envisaged in this clause in relation to a wage

earner with a spouse and children who is permanently impaired, it is difficult to conceive the basis on which his benefit should be two-thirds the amount of death benefit.

The committee divided:

Ayes 5

Mr Bell  
Mr Ede  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mr Smith

Noes 14

Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Hanrahan  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Setter  
Mr Steele  
Mr Tuxworth

Amendment negatived.

Clause 71 agreed to.

Clause 72:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 94.37 and 94.38.

Mr Chairman, in the circumstance where a panel of 3 doctors is not unanimous in its recommendation, the amendments will allow the employee concerned to have a right of appeal to the court. We think it only fair that this right of appeal should exist. As we all know, doctors sometimes have differing opinions on the same matter. In the situation where they fail to agree, the person aggrieved - the employer or the employee - by the assessment should have a right of appeal to the court for a final decision.

We have come to this decision with some reluctance because it will add to the time that particular cases may take to be determined. However, it is a matter of equity that, where doctors cannot agree amongst themselves, the court be the final arbiter.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the assessment of impairment is a purely medical process. In our view, further appeal to a court which would be entirely dependent on medical opinion is not required. This matter has been the subject of considerable debate throughout the consultative processes and I can advise honourable members that it was the majority view that there should not be a right of appeal to the court in relation to this matter.

Amendments negatived.

Clause 72 agreed to.

Clause 73 agreed to.

Clause 74:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.39.

Clause 74 deals with the commutation provisions. The opposition has no basic problem with the way the government has approached this matter nor do we believe in any open-slathe approach to it. There is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that many of the people who have been able to have the payments commuted without good reason have wasted the money. What we are seeking by this amendment is an extension of the existing clause which allows commutation under certain circumstances. At present, those provisions are quite tight. Application must be made to the court in writing and commutation will be granted only where a small amount of money is involved, where the condition of the worker has stabilised, where his rehabilitation is complete, where he is not totally incapacitated, where he resides permanently out of the Territory and only after he has received financial counselling.

Mr Chairman, the new subclause that we wish to insert reads:

The court may also authorise in writing the commutation of a worker's compensation payments at discounted present values (and those payments may be commuted, and the commuted amount paid accordingly) where it is satisfied on an application in writing of the worker that he has received financial counselling before applying, that he has a reasonable prospect of a guaranteed future income, and that, having regard to the likely amount and duration of that income and all the other circumstances of the case, commutation would be reasonable in his interests.

That is pretty tight, Mr Chairman. What we are interested in is the concept of getting people off weekly benefits and their being able to use the money available to them to set themselves up in some sort of business activity. To take an example, if a person in a wheelchair is given \$50 000 or \$60 000 under this provision, he may be able to set himself up in a small business in the Mall or at Casuarina somewhere, selling newspapers or tobacco or whatever. That is just a small example.

I think there is a range of possibilities and the human mind is quite inventive in terms of activities and jobs that people can undertake if they have the income to start them off. What we are saying is that people should be given the chance to apply to the relevant authority for payment in a lump sum. Their ideas would be assessed in terms of financial viability and their capacity to provide them with a future income.

Mr Perron: How can you guarantee that the person will be able to stay in business?

Mr Hatton: What happens if he goes broke?

Mr SMITH: In response to those interjections, I will rephrase that and say that their ideas would be assessed in terms of their having a reasonable prospect of guaranteeing a future income.

Mr Chairman, in my view, it is worth taking the risk in those sorts of cases. Obviously, there will be a risk but, where a person is incapacitated to such an extent that he has no prospect of returning to his previous employment, it would be better to provide him with the means to do something useful in the community. That is the intention of this amendment.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the object of this bill is to achieve what the Leader of the Opposition is promoting: rehabilitation and retraining of the injured worker in order to return him to a productive life. It is a fundamental foundation of this legislation. Part of the policy underlying that philosophy is that lump sum payments should be minimised because they provide a fundamental disincentive to rehabilitation. There is much evidence of that, and that was dealt with fairly extensively in the second-reading debate.

The aim of the legislation is to return the injured person to productive life by means of rehabilitative and other programs. This amendment would allow almost any injured worker to obtain a lump sum provided he meets the 2 simple conditions of receiving financial counselling and having a reasonable prospect of a guaranteed future income.

That is contrary to the direction of this legislation which aims to provide ongoing income maintenance whilst providing rehabilitative and retraining programs to enable the person to return to a productive life.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 74 agreed to.

Clauses 75 to 83 agreed to.

Clause 84:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.40.

Mr Chairman, the opposition has a series of amendments which would omit the phrase '3 working days' and substitute '3 days' in its place. The purpose of this is to speed up the processes involved in having claims assessed and benefits provided. I think I am correct in saying that the original draft of this legislation did not include the word 'working'.

This amendment deals with the time that an employer has in which to forward a claim. What we are proposing is that an employer has to forward a claim to the authority or the insurer within 3 days of receiving it. That is not necessarily within 3 days of the accident because there may well be some time delay between the time of the accident and the time at which the claim is presented to the employer. It is a fairly simple claim form and I see no reason why the 3-day rule rather than 3-working-days rule cannot be applied.

Mr Hatton: Weekends?

Mr SMITH: I do not see that a weekend is any problem. There are long weekends and other breaks where the rule cannot apply. I would hope that the Work Health Authority would be able to exercise some discretion on those occasions. The alternative proposal means that people may wait a week longer for benefits than they would under our proposal.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, we oppose this amendment. Business is carried on during working days. It is unreasonable and illogical to draft legislation without recognising that fact. As the Leader of the Opposition said, if we passed the amendment, we would create situations where the authority would be asked to exercise its discretion and ignore the law. We cannot do that. Working days are an appropriate and a proper way of dealing with this.

Amendment negatived.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 95.2.

This amendment omits from subclause (2) the words '2 days' and inserts '2 working days'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 84, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 85 to 90 agreed to.

Clause 91:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.46.

This amendment deals with medical examinations and provides that, rather than decisions being taken by the employer where a worker is judged to be unreasonable in meeting the request of an employer to undertake a medical examination, the matter be referred to the court. This arises out of an actual case which the member for Arafura referred to some time ago. A person on workers' compensation went to Greece for a holiday and, whilst in Greece, was issued with an instruction to return immediately to undergo a further medical examination. We believe that clause 91, as it stands, would not prevent that sort of situation occurring in the future. We do not believe it is the employer who should make the judgment as to whether a refusal is reasonable or unreasonable. What we are saying is that the employer should take the matter to the Work Health Court where it can be sorted out quickly and equitably.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, this amendment states that a person is either entitled to compensation or not entitled to compensation. The law says that, if the person unreasonably refuses to have a medical examination, his benefits will be suspended. Whether or not his refusal is unreasonable would be determined by the Work Health Court. The amendment is not necessary to achieve that objective.

Mr Smith: Prove it to me.

Mr HATTON: I just did.

Mr SMITH: You did not. Clause 91(3) says that, if a worker unreasonably refuses to have an examination, his right to compensation is suspended until the examination takes place. Who makes the judgment whether he is being reasonable or unreasonable? I am saying that the judgment should be made by the court. You are saying that the judgment would be made under the legislation as it stands. Demonstrate it to me. Where does it say that?

Mr HATTON: The Work Health Court is established with the specific objective of resolving disputes relating to this legislation. The Work Health Court will resolve it. If a person unreasonably refuses to undergo an examination, he will not get his benefits. If there is a dispute as to whether the refusal was reasonable or unreasonable, it will be determined by the Work Health Court.

Mr EDE: Correct me if I am wrong, but I think the difference here is mainly a matter of timing. The Chief Minister is saying that a person may



lose his entitlement, argue in the court that that is unreasonable, and have the entitlement re-established. The point that we are making, if I have it right, is that the matter should go to the court in the first instance to determine whether or not the entitlement should be removed.

Mr SMITH: Perhaps the Chief Minister has some information now. Can he state whether, in his opinion, the clause as it stands prevents an employer suspending the payments of an employee because he, in the employer's view, unreasonably refuses to undertake a medical examination?

Mr HATTON: I am just trying to get this clear. The question is whether the employer needs to go to the Work Health Court to determine whether the refusal was unreasonable or not, or whether the employer makes the decision and the employee has to go to court to contest it. The way the clause is worded means that, if the employee, having been properly advised and given proper notification to attend a medical examination, refuses unreasonably to attend, the employer can suspend the weekly payments.

Mr Smith: That is wrong.

Mr HATTON: What is wrong? Is the employee unreasonably refusing to submit ...

Mr Smith: In the employer's view.

Mr HATTON: If the employee believes that the employer has acted wrongly, he has a right to appeal against him.

Mr Smith: That is right, but he has lost his benefits.

Mr HATTON: I refer the Leader of the Opposition to the clauses concerning the settlement of disputes. The other side of the coin is that clause 91 offers protection for the employer against the manipulative employee who chooses to abuse every legal mechanism under the sun. There are plenty of people around who would avoid medical examinations by all sorts of manoeuvres.

Mr SMITH. I am glad that the Chief Minister has been able to demonstrate at long last that our version was correct despite what he tried to tell us originally. We all realise that both employees and employers can be unreasonable. Neither side has the monopoly on being unreasonable or reasonable. The best way to resolve a situation where either party is unreasonable is to put the matter before the court. It is not a fair proposition to leave it in the hands of the employer to say that the attitude or action of the employee is unreasonable and then enable him to penalise the employee by stopping the payments, when the only avenue left open to the employee is to go to the Work Health Court and attempt to get those payments back. Where there is a dispute, a much more civilised approach would be to give either party recourse to the Work Health Court for resolution of the dispute. If the employee is judged to be guilty, his payments can be stopped from that time.

To do it the other way would be to penalise an employee who has done the right thing and is being got at by an unjust employer. The logic is not there. Our proposition provides an equal basis on which an employer or an employee may approach this problem.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I think the Leader of the Opposition and myself are meandering backwards and forwards about this. Just to show him how

reasonable the government is, I accept that there could be situations where employers might seek to exploit this situation and I think that would be totally unreasonable. The government is prepared to support this amendment. I must note that and the matter will be referred for close scrutiny by the authority. If its application circumvents the intended operation of the act, the Leader of the Opposition can look forward to amendments being introduced to reverse the situation.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 91, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 92 to 110 agreed to.

Clause 111:

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 95.3.

The effect of this amendment is to ensure that there is a mechanism by which all appeals relating to revenues provided for under the bill can be brought before the Work Health Court.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 111, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 112 agreed to.

Clause 113:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.7.

As I understand it, and perhaps the legal eagles out the back may have to confirm this, this is consequential upon agreement on a previous amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 113, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 114 to 126 agreed to.

Postponed clause 60:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I seek leave to withdraw my amendment.

Leave granted.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I have had a look at this and what honourable members opposite brought to our attention was quite accurate. I move that clause 60 be amended by omitting from subclause (3) the words 'Subdivision A of Division 3' and insert in their stead 'Subdivision A or D of Division 3 or Division 4'. Division A covers the funeral and death benefits. Division D covers medical, surgical and rehabilitation benefits and Division 4 rehabilitation training and work place modification, additional travelling costs and other rehabilitation. That would bring it in line with the Motor Accidents Compensation Act.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 60, as amended, agreed to.

Progress reported.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the first topic I want to discuss tonight relates to NTEC in Alice Springs. I wish to record my appreciation to NTEC officers who gave me a briefing on the necessity for turning off the power in the town on various occasions. On occasion, that has been caused by the connection of power to new buildings that have high power demands but there has been an overriding problem in Alice Springs for some time. I refer to the incorrect phasing of reticulation in the town. In layman's terms, this means that, if a car hits a pole and knocks out a powerline, normally NTEC can isolate the problem to a very small area by rerouting the system. However, as a result of past mistakes, the various phases are out of kilter. If NTEC tried to reroute the power, it would do considerable damage and put the whole system out.

These errors are being rectified. NTEC has taken special care to let people know when the power will be off and has tried to ensure that interruptions occur at times that cause the least disruption to the town. Sadadeen stages 2 and 3 are part of my electorate. In 1 area, there was only 1 way in which NTEC could put power through. If a power failure had occurred there for some reason, the whole area would have been out until repairs were effected. I am pleased that NTEC has overcome that problem and power can be transmitted there in a number of ways.

Mr Speaker, I am delighted with the news that a gas turbine will be installed in the Alice Springs power-station in place of the dual fuel No 9 unit which was allowed for in the budget. The cost is greater than that of the dual fuel unit but I understand that it will have considerably greater output. There will be approximately a 25% increase in generating capacity at the Alice Springs power-station. It will not be on line until the end of 1987. I hope that everything keeps functioning at the power-station because, last year, there were times when the station came close to using full capacity. We would not want a machine failure when the demand is that heavy. The gas turbine will have greater efficiency and will make greater use of our natural gas reserves. That is indeed pleasing.

The second matter that I wish to mention tonight is the post office at Alice Springs South. Australia Post has given notice that it intends to close this office down. It expressed its intention to do that some 6 or 7 years ago, just before I came into this Assembly, and the strength of public opinion deterred it from carrying out that intention. The matter has raised its head again. I received a call from Mr John Roberts from Australia Post in Darwin. He indicated to me that it was Australia Post's policy not to have post offices within 2 km of one another. The post office at Alice Springs South is run as a private enterprise business. It is situated only about 350 m away from the main post office. One felt reasonably persuaded by Mr Roberts' argument until returning to Alice Springs and speaking with the proprietor of that business. The Alice Springs South post office opens for business at 8 am whereas the main post office opens at 9 am. The Alice Springs South post office will carry out transactions after 5 pm and is open on Saturday mornings and often throughout the day on Saturday. Many visitors to Alice Springs are

in town only on Saturdays and Sundays. They buy souvenirs and wish to post them. I have had many phone calls and contacts with people who have told me how much they appreciate the service and how friendly and cooperative the staff is. It is a very convenient service for Alice Springs people. That post office does good business and, of course, Australia Post picks up its share of the profits.

I would like to place on record in this Assembly that a large number of tourists and residents in Alice Springs do business with the Alice Springs South post office because of its friendly staff and the convenience of the extra hours. I believe that is a good argument with which to counter that put by Mr Roberts for its closure. I hope that, despite the general policy of Australia Post, the wishes of Alice Springs people will prevail.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak tonight about a cattle station that you would know very well: Mount Allan station. The station received a letter from the Department of Primary Production, dated 5 June 1986. It advised that the whole property had been declared a restricted area because of tuberculosis. There are anomalies in this situation.

Attached to the letter was a Notice of Restriction of Property for tuberculosis, issued under the Stock Diseases Act. This letter stated that paddocks 1, 4, 5, 7 and 9 are classified D, which is the restricted classification under which movement is possible only with the permission of the Chief Inspector of Stock. The remainder of the property was shown on the attached notice as being 'PC', which means 'provisionally clear'. The difference between those 2 classifications is quite substantial. Under the restricted classification, movement is allowed only with the permission of the Chief Inspector of Stock. The provisionally clear classification allows movement if permission is granted following an application in writing to the Chief Inspector of Stock at least 14 days prior to the proposed movement.

My first point is that the station received a letter which declared the entire property to be restricted whereas the notice and attachment stated that part of the property is restricted and the other part is provisionally clear. Mount Allan is an excellent property. It is one of the best developed properties in central Australia, Aboriginal-owned or otherwise. It has been declared clear of brucellosis for 10 years and has had no brucellosis readings for 20 years. Obviously, if the provisionally clear areas were tested again, they could be declared completely clear or otherwise.

The property management is very worried about the outcome of this situation. To understand the reasons for this, it is necessary to understand the history of testing there. Between 1976 and 1985, 25 105 cattle were tested for tuberculosis. Only 3 beasts were found to have the disease. For the last 7 years the average number of cattle sold has been approximately 2600. Of those 18 200 cattle, only 3 infected beasts were traced to the station from the abattoirs. On all stock sold to local and southern pastoralists and subsequently processed at various abattoirs, no positive reactors were ever found. Thus, the station has had only 6 positive reactors from 25 105 animals tested by the Department of Primary Production and 18 200 sold to abattoirs, a total of 43 305 cattle tested and sold. In the year to 30 June 1986, 6500 head of cattle were tested on the property. There were no positive reactors among them and none traced through the abattoirs.

The Department of Primary Production concedes that these figures show that there were no TB-positive reactors on Mount Allan at 1 July 1986. It cannot grant Mount Allan tested-negative, confirmed-free status because its western,

northern and eastern neighbours are infected. This would appear to mean that Mount Allan stock will remain suspect until all its adjacent neighbours obtain tested-negative or confirmed-free status.

The paddocks I referred to earlier are used by the department to form a buffer zone between remaining paddocks on Mount Allan and the surrounding properties which have TB-infected stock. Whilst Department of Primary Production representatives agree on all the statistics and test results which I have quoted, they say that Mount Allan will never be classified as monitor-negative, tested-negative or confirmed-free under the department's strategy. I find that extremely unjust because a tremendous amount of work has been carried out on the property. Fence lines have been cleared and graded, high-stranded fencing has been installed, a large number of subdivisions have been created and numerous bores and dams are operational. There are over 20 paddocks, and the property is in excellent condition. However, its managers have been told that, because of the neighbours, they will not be able to achieve the status whereby they can start making some decent money by increasing interstate sales of their excellent stock.

At this moment, 406 head of stock are ready for sale to Goulburn in New South Wales. A few cattle with green tags were brought in from Mt Denison. They were tested and found to be clear, but were placed in quarantine. After the quarantine period, they were tested again and, on the advice of the Department of Primary Production, were placed with the mob to be sent down to Goulburn. Because of those stock that have been tested twice and both times found to be free of disease, Mount Allan has been told that the whole mob cannot be moved. Mount Allan has never chased government grants. It has always paid its own way. However, this puts it in a situation where it just cannot continue to pay wages and operate.

The surrounding stations are not really that bad. Yuendumu had 1 reactor years ago. Mt Denison had 2 reactors in its north-east paddock. Napperby had a problem in a paddock which adjoins Mount Allan, but all infected cattle were cleared out and only clean cattle remain there now. Given the work done by this station, I believe it would be fair for the Department of Primary Production to negotiate with surrounding stations to achieve a buffer zone. This could be done by putting clean stock into the paddocks which adjoin Mount Allan which would enable the station to move to confirmed-free status. It is unfair that Mount Allan has done so much to achieve confirmed-free status, only to be told it can never achieve it because of surrounding stations. The efforts of Jack Cook and many others have made Mount Allan 1 of the best properties in central Australia. I think it would be fair for properties which have not been able to achieve the same status to create the buffer zone by moving clean cattle into the adjoining paddocks.

Mount Allan has made considerable efforts to ease its difficult financial situation. As you know, Mr Speaker, the region was struck by a very severe drought and many stations attempted to utilise government programs to help them carry on through that period. Mount Allan had been trucking 2600 head of cattle each year for some time in order to reduce stock numbers. Now that it is in a stable situation and actually trying to build up stock again, it is only trucking 1800 to 2000 every year which means that it is not eligible for drought relief.

Another aspect of government drought relief is the scheme which covers station debts up to \$40 000 at 7% interest. The low interest rate enables properties to carry on through a difficult period. Mount Allan's problem is that it has applied under that scheme, but has not received the assistance.

The people at the station told me that, to the best of their knowledge, nobody in central Australia had received relief in those terms, as was promised by this government. While there have been good rains recently, many properties are restocking and trying to get back on their feet. I was told that some stations, which applied 6 or 8 months before the drought was declared finished, never received the \$40 000 at 7%. I am very disappointed about that. It is 11 months since those people first applied for that \$40 000 and my information is that nobody in central Australia has received it.

I notice that the minister is scribbling notes and I hope they are in reply to my queries. I have advised him of a fairly substantial number of Mount Allan's problems, particularly in relation to short-term cash flow and the need to move those cattle down to New South Wales. Incidentally, the cattle are going down for fattening, not for breeding. They are going to a clean property which has no other cattle, so there is no danger in that regard. I understand that we have to satisfy the New South Wales authorities before we can move the cattle.

My point is that all 406 head of stock have been tested negative throughout the accepted period set down by the Department of Primary Production. The problem lies with the 26 head which came from a dirty area. Whilst it is true that they came from a dirty area, they were tested clear and then put into quarantine. On the advice of the Department of Primary Production, subsequently they were moved in with the other stock. I do not believe the argument that they could not be moved after 1 more test. That test would make a total of 3, which would more than qualify them to be moved. I would like the minister to take this matter up with his department and to ask it to facilitate the movement of those cattle.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, the member for Fannie Bay asked me a question this morning and I want to advise him that the Minister for Health has said that he is interested in public comment on the regulations accompanying the Food Act. He invited public comment and comment from members of the Assembly on any matter which interested them. I took up the minister's offer some months ago because I have some concern with the regulations relating to milk and milk products and, to a lesser degree, to meat and meat products and bread and bread products.

I am particularly concerned about milk and milk products because 1 of only 2 dairies in the Northern Territory is in my electorate and most of the goat milk produced in the Northern Territory is provided by small producers in my electorate. It should be recognised that the milk industry in the Territory, especially the goat milk industry, is a young one which does not want to be heavily loaded with bureaucratic red tape and burdensome regulations which would completely inhibit its birth so that, instead of having a bonny, healthy infant, we would have a stillbirth.

The regulations which the minister sent me were similar to regulations to be enacted in other states following recommendations from the National Health and Medical Council. I will read the regulation pertaining to goat milk:

Save where it is specifically exempted by the state or territory health authority, unpasteurised goat milk shall not be sold for direct human consumption, provided that unpasteurised goat milk may be sold for manufacturing purposes only if the processing includes pasteurisation. In making this recommendation, council recognises that pasteurisation may not be possible in some remote areas and it would be necessary to include in its recommendations that health authorities have provision to exempt such areas from the requirement.

I am very pleased to see that there is some discretion for the Department of Health in the Territory to not insist on the pasteurisation of goat milk, allowing it to be sold raw in some instances. But, it appears from the proposed regulations that, if the goat milk is sold unpasteurised to a cheese-making business, then the resultant cheese has to be pasteurised.

Mr Speaker, I do not know about other parts of the Territory, but in the Top End only 1 company is making goat milk cheese. It is a small industry which is just starting up at Nightcliff. From my discussion with the gentleman there, it appears that it sells unpasteurised cheese. No deception is intended in selling the cheese. Some cheeses we buy are pasteurised and some are unpasteurised. The unpasteurised cheeses would have to be eaten sooner than the pasteurised cheeses. However, recognition has to be given to the fact that the public must have a choice and a private industry that is showing signs of great promise should not be stifled before it even begins to become properly established.

In the same set of regulations, there is a description of the pasteurisation process which is necessary for goat milk if it is to be sold pasteurised. As all honourable members know, pasteurisation involves heating. The goat milk must be heated to a temperature of not less than 72°C. The milk has to be retained at that temperature for not less than 15 seconds and immediately shock cooled to a temperature of not more than 4.5°C. There is another form of treating the milk, by ultra heat, which is UHT. This involves goat milk which has been subjected to a temperature of not less than 133°C and aseptically packed. Another means of sterilising goat milk involves heating hermetically-sealed packages. Thus, there are 3 different heating processes that may be used.

The reason for insisting on pasteurisation of goat milk in most cases is to prevent our contracting 'diseases' from raw goat milk. Comparing my health to that of other honourable members, I reckon I am pretty healthy. Probably, I am the only 1 among us who has been been drinking goat milk for quite a few years, and that has been raw goat milk to boot. I do not scald it, boil it, pasteurise it or submit it to any form of treatment. It is completely raw milk. The point I am making is that, if milk is produced in healthy, hygienic conditions, there is no danger at all in selling it raw to the public.

One of the diseases that people say we will get from goat milk if it is sold raw is toxoplasmosis, but this is a furphy put around by people who have nothing else to occupy their time and who want to score a few points in the community. Over the last few years, small articles have appeared in the popular press regarding the danger of contracting toxoplasmosis through drinking raw goat milk. Toxoplasmosis is a disease of all animals, including birds and man. It causes abortions and stillbirths in some animals, encephalitis, pneumonia and deaths in the newborn. It is caused by a protozoa or single-celled organism called *Toxoplasma gondii*. It is actually an abrogate form of coccidiosis which sometimes can be found in cats.

To continue, it has been found by Dr Dewby, who conducted extensive experiments in this matter, that *Toxoplasma gondii* present in goat milk is not very infectious and is completely different from the 2 infectious forms. He concluded that the likelihood of *Toxoplasma gondii* being in the milk of naturally infected goats is very small and, at the stage at which it is likely to be present, would be the tachyzoite which is destroyed by gastric juice so that the risk of infection to humans would seem to be infinitesimal.

One of the great qualities of goat milk is that it can be very easily digested by human infants and, in cases where the parents are sensible and follow sensible medical treatment, it is fed to babies who have allergies and cannot digest the protein in human milk. For some reason or other, these children cannot be breastfed or, if they are breastfed, protein from cow milk or beef the mother may eat passes through her system to the baby creating a severe allergy. Obviously, goat milk is not the food of choice for human infants. Any substitute must be second best to breast milk. Goat milk is produced for kids, cow milk for calves and human milk for babies. But where, for whatever reason, mothers are unable to breastfeed, generally goat milk is a very satisfactory substitute. Goat milk has a role to play in the diet of breastfeeding mothers whose babies have become sensitised in utero to the protein in cow milk.

The chemical composition of goat milk differs a little from that of breast milk. However, the chemical composition is known and certain additives can be combined with it to bring it up to a pretty fair comparison with human milk. Tests conducted in Canada indicate that about 8% of Canadian infants are intolerant of cow milk, and there is no reason to think that the Australian figures would be markedly different. 8% of babies have to be fed some other form of milk. If they are fed breast milk, the mothers would have either to restrict their own intake of bovine milk or to drink goat milk themselves.

Further tests have suggested that cow milk and its products rank in the leading 4 food causes of allergic illness, along with the products of wheat, corn and eggs. A veterinary authority from Queensland says:

Paradoxically, and rather surprisingly, the sterilisation of milk actually predisposes infants to certain infectious diseases. Necrotising enterocolitis, a potentially fatal affliction of the newborn, occurs only when sterilised milk is given. In many neonatal nurseries around the world, the incidence of NEC has risen from 2% to 8% of babies, and this dramatic increase is now being seen in Australia. Goat milk, however, has certain physical qualities which make it superior. These superior qualities are detrimentally affected by heat treatment, notably the fineness of the curd. The fineness of the curd relates to the size of the protein molecule, both in the milk, its solids and the whey. This is one of the reasons why goat milk is given to those cases who suffer severe allergies.

Mr Speaker, the article goes on to say that, if infants are fed a continuing diet of pasteurised milk, they can suffer certain deficiencies. This is unimportant for adults and older children, but it may be critical for infants who derive most, if not all, of their nutrition from milk. Certain other tests have been conducted and observations made by nursing mothers associations which have said that some infants cannot tolerate beef proteins. When the mothers substituted goat milk and dairy products for the cow equivalents, breast feeding problems with their babies usually ended.

Mr Speaker, a Countrywide program was broadcast by the ABC a couple of months ago which reported that goat milk was detrimental to health, especially raw goat milk. It was said that it had caused deaths in the United States, and pasteurisation was the only way to avoid this. But investigation showed that the deaths were caused by a disease called listeriosis which survives pasteurisation. That was the cause of the deaths in Massachusetts. They were associated with pasteurised - and I stress 'pasteurised' - cow milk. In Queensland, where this article originated, registered dairies supplying raw



milk for human consumption are required to test every 10 days for bacterial quality. I would have no objection to goat milk producers being required to have their products undergo either regular testing or random testing to ensure that the milk is hygienically produced. The claim that pasteurisation of milk totally eliminated all risks, therefore, was found to be incorrect.

The standard of hygiene in the production of goat milk is much more important than the fact that it is raw goat milk. It is much more important to strive to produce really clean milk, with a total bacterial content which is always less than 10 000 per millilitre, than it is to pasteurise it. Many people can do this, so why can't they all? This information was produced from the results of another experiment. And I might say, Mr Speaker, that that count of 10 000 per millilitre is much less than that which is permitted in Scotland: 50 000 organisms per millilitre at 30°. The standards of hygiene in milk production are much higher in Australia.

I will touch briefly on the composition of the milk. Goat milk is higher in protein than human milk and also higher in casein, lactalbumin and fat. It is not as high in lactose but it is higher in caloric value and in minerals. Goat milk is slightly lower in vitamin A than human milk but it is higher in vitamin D, thiamine, riboflavin and nicotinic acid. I do not have any results for pantothenic acid or vitamin B1. It is about the same in folic acid although some authorities say it is a bit lacking in folic acid and that folic acid has to be administered as a supplement. It is higher in biotin but lacking in vitamin B12 and vitamin C.

Mr Speaker, I do not have time to complete the information that I have. Perhaps I will continue at a later date and regale members with further information on this very interesting subject.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Speaker, instead of talking about Kakadu National Park, which I think has had a pretty good airing during this week, I would like to talk about Uluru. I am pleased to see our government take up the vacant seat on the board of management and I support the nomination of our Minister for Tourism, the member for Flynn, and the Minister for Conservation, the member for Victoria River. I know this move will meet with the approval of members of the Alice Springs Regional Tourist Association as they are keen to see tourist operators, and indeed tourists, have some representation on the board. Indeed, I note that the federal ministers who have equivalent portfolios in tourism and conservation are both on the board.

Whilst I believe the relationship between private enterprise and the ANPWS is reasonably satisfactory, there are a number of things that the association is not happy about. I am pleased to see that members of the association are to attend the tour operators and managers' workshop which will be held at Uluru on 30 November and 1 December. It is a pity that they were not invited in the first place. Apparently, as a result of their representations, they will be permitted to attend. I note the Alice Springs Regional Tourist Association has invited Professor Ovington, the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, to address a general meeting of the association. I am pleased to hear that the professor has accepted this invitation. No doubt, both parties will obtain a better understanding of each other's role. Exchanges between the board of management and private enterprise can only assist everybody to be more tolerant and understanding and, indeed, they may assist the board of management to a better understanding of the industry's requirements and to seek ways and means of compromise in sensitive areas.

Since the ANPWS has taken over the park, a number of changes have occurred. For the first time, the park has been closed down because of a ceremony albeit, according to the media, for only 45 minutes. A few weeks ago, I met 4 American tourists, who were staying with a neighbour of mine, whose trip to see the Rock was completely ruined as they understood the park would be closed for 4 hours and they only flew in for the day. That is not my idea of a holiday at Ayers Rock but, apparently, some people do go down there for only 1 day.

Mr Speaker, a subject close to my heart is photographs of the Rock. This has raised its ugly head again and the industry believes that professional photographers are no longer permitted to photograph Kantju Gorge, the Brain, the Bell Cave and the Women's Cave. Photographic briefings have also stated that Mt Olga itself, the front domes of the Olgas, the Valley of the Winds and inside the Olgas' domes must not be photographed either.

Visitors to the park are no longer allowed to light barbecue fires in the park at any time. I do not have any argument with that but, for many years, the Conservation Commission seemed capable of controlling the barbecue fire areas quite reasonably. I think that some sort of compromise could be reached there. I know that, in the past, a barbecue at sunset at the back of the Olga was a very popular part of many tours. A local tour operator has now been told that barbecue teas at the Olgas are not permitted. Unfortunately, this happened after he had been given permission and had printed 20 000 brochures. He wasted a lot of money.

I know both the Alice Springs and the Yulara Regional Tourist Associations have made representations to the board of management on the needs of industry and both associations were disappointed with the reply they received. They described it as a Clayton's reply. According to the associations, the tourist industry's needs come a poor third after Aboriginal and environmental interests. If it were not for the tourists, we would not have the environmental concerns. Indeed, if it were not for the tourists, it is doubtful that many Aboriginal people who have now settled permanently at the Rock would have done so.

The board of management and the ANPWS have a long way to go to build up a good working relationship with the industry. The road to the Olgas is a case in point. More than \$250 000 has been lost by vehicle operators. I am not talking about national companies though some Territorians seem to have the idea that national companies have lots of money and it does not really matter what happens to them. In this case, I am talking solely about NT local coach and car hire operators who have had cars written off or badly damaged over this road for many years. Indeed, 1 company told me that it alone had had 10 cars written off. These operators consider themselves extremely lucky that none of their clients has been killed. I note that, a fortnight ago, 2 deaths occurred on that highway but I believe they were closer to Docker River than to Mt Olga itself. Since 1981, constant requests to seal this road have elicited the fairly standard response that funds have been sought by the ANPWS every year, with the minister's support, but without success. This is not good enough. When we have a fatality on the road and it is reported in the national press, we will probably find that the road will be sealed very quickly.

Mr Speaker, I am not having a go at the Aboriginal people at the Rock, but people must understand that, when industry hears that the road has not been fixed between the Rock and the Olgas, then it does not understand why money is likely to be spent to relocate the almost brand new ring road around the Rock.

The operators think it is nonsense. I tend to agree. Maybe it is because I do not understand the reasons for it. If this is so, then the board and the ANPWS have a marketing job to do. Maybe it is time to sit down and explain the reasons and motives behind some of these rules and regulations. I think I understand because I worked in indigenous cultural areas many years ago in Canada. However, there are certainly many people, particularly those in the industry, who do not understand. We will continue this argument between black and white until an understanding can be reached.

I would like to move away from Uluru and mention a few things about Yulara. Yulara has been very successful from an occupancy point of view. All aspects of the resort have been achieving high levels of occupancy, indeed, so much so that we have now come full circle. When I first arrived in Alice Springs 6 years ago, Ayers Rock hoteliers used to complain that they were losing tours at certain times of the year because the tourists could not find accommodation in Alice Springs. We have reached the situation now where Alice Springs is losing tours because Yulara is full at certain times of the year. Last week, the manager of Deluxe Coachlines told me that he had lost bookings from a group of 500 people recently because of this.

The industry itself uses up to 20 staff rooms at Yulara and it is requesting that these people be offered alternative accommodation. A number of staff accommodation blocks are being built at the old construction site. That is a very positive move. Also, I think that the Kings Canyon development could take some of the pressure off Yulara during these peak periods. I am sure our government will respond to these requests and Yulara will go from strength to strength.

Mr Speaker, the 1 component inhibiting the development of the tourist industry in the Centre is the Alice Springs Airport. I have already mentioned this in the Assembly on 3 occasions in my short parliamentary career to date. What are we going to do? It is essential to increase the size of the terminal building and aircraft parking apron. The staff at the airport do a tremendous job under very difficult conditions. I could not help noticing on Monday the unsatisfactory parking area for coaches and the difficulties that coach captains face in looking after their passengers. The car park always seems to be overfull and, to my knowledge over 6 years, people have had to park on the gravel area to the north of the car park and on the gravel edge of the roadway to the north-east because there are simply not enough car parking spaces.

It is interesting to note that the employees of the federal Department of Civil Aviation enjoy pride of place immediately in front of their building which is adjacent to the terminal building, and that they park their cars there all day. The paying passengers are forced to carry their bags 100 yards from the gravel area. I also note that DCA has had a shady area behind its building for many years. It even has a rear entrance there. Surely its car park could be moved for the convenience of the general public. I repeat that something must be done to improve facilities at Alice Springs Airport.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, last week, there was considerable discussion during adjournment debates on the problems of petrol sniffing in Aboriginal communities. Indeed, much concern was expressed from both sides of the Assembly regarding the effects that this horrendous addiction is having on Aboriginal youth in the Northern Territory. It is a major problem but one which the government is addressing. We believe that the sooner the Aboriginal communities themselves come to terms with this issue and take it upon themselves to exert the authority of private elders, then the sooner a solution will be found.

Mr Speaker, tonight I do not intend to pursue this matter any further because enough has been said on the issue. I wish to refute comments made during that debate by the members for Stuart and Arnhem. I would first like to quote from page 95 of the uncorrected Hansard of 20 November 1986. The member for Stuart said:

I was amazed that the member for Jingili did not cover the situation of petrol sniffing in the Rapid Creek Water Gardens. It was not mentioned. He was too busy ranging around the Aboriginal electorates around the east Arnhem area and talking about Bickerton. He did not talk about the various other problems that are associated with the water gardens: the vandalism, the fornicating, the drinking and the other activities that occur in that area.

Mr Speaker, I was most concerned to hear about all this petrol sniffing, fornicating and drinking that allegedly occurs in the Rapid Creek Water Gardens. I was so concerned that I asked the police if they had any knowledge of the activities of these terrible people who seem to carry on with all of this nonsense in the water gardens. Inspector Morrison from the Berrimah Police Station informed me ...

Mr Steele: It is a Labor Party precinct.

Mr SETTER: The member for Millner, whose electorate adjoins mine on the other side of Rapid Creek, happens to be the Leader of the Opposition. I have not had the opportunity to take the matter up with him to see if he can throw any light on these activities in the water gardens. Perhaps they occur across Rapid Creek from Jingili, but he may be able to comment on that later.

According to Inspector Morrison, there is no evidence at all of petrol sniffing in the water gardens. He has received no complaints personally. In fact, the police have received no complaints. They visit the water gardens regularly and, of course, they note the sort of things that are left lying around. One of the indicators of petrol sniffing is that empty cans, bent up to fit over the nose and mouth are generally found lying about. The kids cut the top out of a can, bend it up to the right shape, fill it with petrol and sniff their little brains away. There is no evidence of such cans lying around in the water gardens, none whatsoever. In fact, the police have not sighted anybody sniffing petrol there, nor have they apprehended anybody.

I hasten to add, though, that people have been apprehended drinking in the water gardens. On 1 or 2 occasions, I have reported to the police that intoxicated people were lolling around on the ground drinking. It is possible to obtain a licence to drink in the water gardens and I have done that on occasions myself. When I have wanted to take an esky there to have a drink with a few friends I have obtained a licence so that I would not contravene the 2 km drinking law. I will admit that there has been that odd occasion.

Vandalism? Yes, certainly there has been vandalism there, as the member for Millner would know because he has been involved in reporting vandalism in the water gardens. Regularly, taps are snapped off and thrown through reinforced glass panels which are located around some of the rotundas. That sort of activity occurs. But that sort of thing is not peculiar to the Jingili water gardens; it occurs throughout the northern suburbs of Darwin in all the toilet blocks behind the shopping centres. If you go to those toilets, you can see some absolutely disgusting graffiti written on the walls and pornographic murals painted there. However, that is another matter.

Let me get back to the water gardens. The member for Stuart indicated that fornication was occurring in the Rapid Creek Water Gardens. His comments are recorded on page 95 of the uncorrected Hansard of Thursday 20 November. I am not quite sure what evidence he has of that or what his involvement in that could possibly be, but he says that it is occurring. One would consider that he is well informed in this matter, but I have never seen fornication in the water gardens. However, if he has any evidence at all of fornication occurring in the water gardens in my electorate, I would be only too pleased to have him report that to me.

Mr Ede: I am not a dobber.

Mr SETTER: You are not a dobber? Well, let's see.

The member for Stuart waffled on until he finally arrived at the Yuendumu Sports. At page 96, it is reported that he said in reference to the Yuendumu Sports:

It was a matter of some slight regret to me that there are a number of people in the Assembly who at this time last year, when I spoke on the Yuendumu Sports, said how keen they were and that they hoped to attend this year. The member for Jingili was one of them. He said how keen he was to come down to my electorate and attend the Yuendumu Sports. I invited him at the time and said: 'Bring your swag. You will be most welcome'.

Indeed, that is true, but where the system fell down was the he did not advise me when the Yuendumu Sports were to be conducted. Had I realised that they were on, I would have been very happy to roll my swag, forget about the dog - he referred to 'putting on the dog' and I don't have one - and go down to Yuendumu to participate.

Mr Ede: I will tell you when the next sports is: next year.

Mr SETTER: Please do because, if you do, I will come down.

Mr Ede: That's it; next year.

Mr SETTER: And I intend to hold you to that because I would be delighted to attend the Yuendumu Sports. I am quite sure it is a very interesting event.

Here is another of his fascinating quotes: 'We are not political out there. We just enjoy our sports'. I am quite sure they enjoy their sports but, as for not being political, well that is another matter. He informed us also that the sports were attended by Gordon Bryant, whom I seem to recall was a member of the Whitlam government, Clyde Holding, who is a member of the Hawke government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and the member for Arafura. In spite of the fact that he assured us that no politicking went on down there, it would appear that the representation was very heavily loaded by 1 particular political party.

Mr Ede: They weren't going to stay away just because you couldn't find out the date.

Mr SETTER: You remember to tell me next time and I will come down, swag and all.

Mr Ede: I told you: next year.

Mr SETTER: I will bring the billy and the kids and mum and we'll have a great time.

Mr Ede: Don't forget the dog.

Mr SETTER: I will really look forward to it.

The member for Arnhem made some very interesting comments along the same lines. On page 99 of the uncorrected Hansard of Thursday 20 November, he is reported as saying: 'I have often asked him to come out to Arnhem Land' - he was referring to myself - 'not just for 10 minutes or for half an hour, but to actually spend a night out there, or 2 nights, or maybe a couple of weeks to see some of the areas that he would not otherwise see'. I informed the member for Arnhem that I would be delighted to visit his electorate because I am very keen to travel around and have a look at those outstations. As members are well aware, I have a concern for the consumption of kava in the Arnhem Land settlements. When this matter first arose during the August Assembly sittings in 1985, we had a discussion in the lounge and I said to the honourable member that I would be very keen to visit his electorate. After those sittings, I wrote to him on 4 September 1985, and I quote:

Dear Mr Lanhupuy,

I am writing to confirm my acceptance of your invitation, issued during the adjournment debate of 29 August 1985, to visit some of the Aboriginal communities within your electorate. In my adjournment speech of the same evening, I indicated to you my interest in, and concern for, the welfare of Aboriginal people. It is only by visiting such communities, and seeing the conditions prevailing at first hand, that I will be able to assess the situation objectively. I would be pleased to join you during one of your trips around your electorate, and will leave it to you to advise a suitable date.

Mr Deputy Speaker, did I receive a reply or an acknowledgement? No, I did not. Not a word. Yet, last Thursday, he accused me of not visiting his electorate and failing to take up his invitation. Of course, I have just proved to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that that is absolutely absurd because I wrote to him and offered to visit his electorate, but I received no response at all except total silence. I will again state for the record my offer to visit his electorate and travel around those communities with him. I would be delighted to hear from him in the near future and, as soon as it is convenient to him, I will travel with him around to the various communities.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to make some remarks that I intended to make before I was rudely interrupted this morning. I refer to a matter that is of great electoral importance to me and which has great significance for the Northern Territory. The problem ...

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Under standing orders, no member may allude to any debate or proceedings in the same session unless the allusion is relevant to the matter under discussion. We are in the adjournment, and I believe that the honourable member for Barkly is alluding to a subject which was discussed as a matter of public importance this morning.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will uphold the point of order that honourable members are unable to debate the matter of public importance which has been previously debated today.

Mr TUXWORTH: I am very pleased, Mr Deputy Speaker, because I have no intention of debating the matter of public importance that was discussed this morning. I intend to refer to a matter of great importance within my electorate, and a project which I think has great implications for my electorate, my constituents and the Northern Territory as a whole.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I refer, without reservation, to the possible establishment of an incinerator in my electorate for the disposal of industrial and toxic wastes from throughout Australia. This is a problem that has been ignored for at least 10 years by governments of Australia and they have done that with impunity. Any minister who has sat on the Conservation Ministers Council or the Environment Ministers Council would know that almost their entire business is taken up with discussion about how to get rid of toxic wastes. It is ludicrous that we do not have any facilities in Australia to dispose of these wastes and, worse than that, go to the trouble of bringing in ships like the Vulcanus at a cost of about \$6m a visit when it is actually available. The Vulcanus takes on liquid industrial wastes - no solids - treats them at sea and throws the residue overboard. We can all recall the opposition's howls of protest about the French doing that sort of thing at Moruroa. We are not too bad at it ourselves. It is time we took a responsible approach to the disposal of toxic wastes and started to deal with the problem reasonably and sensibly.

The reality is that in Australia we have industrial and toxic wastes stored in yards, warehouses, homes and factories without supervision, and with no constraints or controls. It is about time the people of Australia did something about it. We have to act; it is as simple as that. We are morally obliged to stop dumping material at sea. Environmental groups throughout Australia, including the Australian Environment Council, would agree that there is a desperate need for Australians to find a way of disposing of these materials. I would be the first person to acknowledge that this is a problem for Australia because there is no political will to do it.

In the past few years, the New South Wales government has considered putting in a facility at Broken Hill, the Western Australian government has considered putting a facility in at Kalgoorlie and the Victorian government has agreed to install a facility which will only look after that state. This piecemeal approach is not doing the Australian community any good. In recent times, proposals have been put forward to establish an incinerator near Tennant Creek in my electorate. I think that proposal has considerable merit. It is something that should be investigated seriously by the government and those people who are interested in it.

There are some important advantages in locating an incinerator in the area of Tennant Creek: the area is relatively isolated from main population centres; it has a dry climate which is environmentally preferable to a high rainfall area; it is geologically stable, with some of the oldest and most stable rocks in the world; it has access to major truck routes; it has existing infrastructure available; and it has gas available from the new Palm Valley to Darwin pipeline. There is also community awareness and support because the Tennant Creek community is aware of the dangers of toxic substances, having used them for nearly 50 years. The mining process has involved the storage, use and transportation of toxic materials such as acids, mercury and cyanide. These have all been used safely in the Tennant Creek locality over a long period.

In raising the possibility of the establishment of an incinerator at Tennant Creek as an option, the first criterion is that the project must be economic. It is essential that the environmental aspects of the project be sound and that it has the support of the Tennant Creek community. It is absolutely imperative that the project be monitored and controlled by the government.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I must advise the honourable member that he is reviving the subject which was discussed earlier today as a matter of public importance. I quote from the letter of the member for Stuart:

...the failure of the Northern Territory government to take proper account of the desires of the people in and around Tennant Creek in that it has continued to promote the development of toxic waste disposal facilities in that area.

As I said earlier, it is not permitted to reflect on an earlier debate and I ask that the member refrain from continuing on this subject.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I must ask you for a ruling on this because I am at a loss. I am speaking as the member for Barkly about a project that is to be established in my electorate. I am not talking about the debate held this morning. I have no interest in it; it is over.

Mr SPEAKER: I again advise the honourable member that he is contravening standing orders. The topic of his speech tonight is the subject matter of this morning's matter of public importance, and I am unable to allow him to continue.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I regret that I do not have a speech about goat milk, but I will move to another topic which does relate to my electorate and which is also a matter of great interest. Remarks have been made recently concerning the ability of my constituents to achieve land rights in the land claims west of Warrego and my support or otherwise for those land claims. In fact, it was said that I opposed land claims that were granted recently. I would like to put the record straight.

I have never opposed land claims west of Tennant Creek. I have bitterly opposed the fact that water rights and the control of water involved in those land claims have been vested in the hands of a group of people in the Northern Territory at the possible expense of others. I have always maintained that water is such a precious commodity in the Northern Territory that no group should have monopolistic control over the resources of water at the expense of any other members of the community. Northern Territory legislation has been in place for many years that requires farmers and miners and anybody else to give access to other members of the community who need water. I find it abhorrent and totally unacceptable that water resources that are locked up in land claims are given to a section of the community and are under the control of those people.

Mr Ede: In 200 years time, they might need it.

Mr TUXWORTH: I am not interested in when it may be needed. I am saying that the principle of allowing in the Northern Territory any group to have control over water at the expense of others is totally unacceptable. I do not believe miners, farmers, private individuals or ethnic groups should have control over underground or other water supplies at the expense of others. I make that quite clear because people have been quick to point out that I have



opposed their land claims. I have not opposed their land claims. I have certainly opposed the concept of those claims locking up the water supplies of the Northern Territory.

I would like to touch on another important event that took place in my electorate today. I refer to the opening of the Anyinginyi Health Centre. This has been developed and funded by the Aboriginal Development Commission and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. It was built on a site that has been vacant in Tennant Creek for many years and I am sure it will be a great asset to the town. It is proposed to run an Aboriginal health service in this centre. While other towns in the Territory have had Aboriginal health services for quite some time, this is the first for Tennant Creek.

During earlier days, I had an opportunity to become involved and to work with independent health services, and I think that comes to mind was the incredible failure of the Papunya Independent Health Service.

Mr Ede: Oh come on, you set it up.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the honourable member interjects that I set it up. That is untrue. It was set up by the Commonwealth government before self-government. We did not oppose the Aboriginal community taking it over, and we were happy to support them and help them put it back on the rails when it collapsed. The point that I wish to make about this health service is very simply that there is no such thing as an independent health service. Every health service requires the support of other health care agencies and facilities. The first thing the independent health service in Tennant Creek will want is access to the midwifery ward, the pharmaceutical and x-ray services, the Flying Doctor Service, the night patient service and a whole range of other facilities. It will rely very heavily on complementary service by the government health service to survive and provide its clients with a decent service.

I welcome the opening of the new facility in Tennant Creek and I hope it goes well. Such facilities seem to have succeeded in most other places and have performed a very useful service. However, I say that the government needs to lay to rest the belief that there is an independent health service that is able to provide all things to Aboriginal people without the resources of the Northern Territory Department of Health. If we can break down that barrier very early in the piece, I am sure that both Anyinginyi and the Northern Territory Department of Health will be able to provide the Aboriginals of my community with a very useful facility.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

NOTICE OF MOTION  
Censure of Government

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I give notice that on the next sitting day I shall move that this Assembly censure the government for its failure during these sittings to:

- (a) show that it has exercised due responsibility, control and care in the affairs of the Northern Territory; and
- (b) provide to the parliament the information that would normally be expected by a government reporting to parliament on its financial and administrative responsibilities.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, pursuant to standing order No 95, the government accepts the motion of censure. Mr Speaker, I request that all questions be placed on the question paper.

MOTION OF CENSURE

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly censure the government for its failure during these sittings to:

- (a) show that it has exercised due responsibility, control and care in the affairs of the Northern Territory; and
- (b) provide to the parliament the information that would normally be expected by a government reporting to parliament on its financial and administrative responsibilities.

Mr Speaker, we who are fortunate enough to be in this parliament are the inheritors of a proud tradition. We operate in a parliament that is based on the Westminster system. Parliament evolved out of the desire of people centuries ago to check the absolute power of the monarchy in England. Its development has always been stormy and sometimes it has been bloody. It is still pretty stormy but very rarely, thankfully, does it get bloody, and certainly not in my memory.

In Australia, the role of parliament has become increasingly that of checking the power of the executive. The executive is responsible to the parliament for the efficient conduct of government in the Northern Territory. The parliament is directly accountable to the people and has the right to demand that level of information that will enable it to make its own judgments on the manner in which the executive has performed. It is a hallmark of responsible, representative government that governments are publicly accountable for their activities. Public accountability for the disbursement of the taxpayers' dollar is a principle that must be adhered to by all governments that call themselves democratic.

Public accountability without public disclosure is a nonsense. The public can hold the government accountable for its actions only if it is informed of the nature of those actions. The parliament is the appropriate place for that information to be supplied. A government not prepared for parliamentary scrutiny of its operations is a government that has something to hide. It is a government not prepared to take the electorate into its confidence.

These sittings of the Assembly have marked a new low in the era of government secrecy. The following devices have been used to refuse answers to opposition questions and probes. The government used sub judice in the case of the Skywest aero-medical affair. It used the excuse of a police investigation in the case of Annaburroo so that the Minister for Lands did not have to provide us with full and detailed information. It used a public servant's right to privacy to refuse answers to questions on the payout to Dr Richard Madden even though it was quite clear that Dr Madden did not insist on it and that the Chief Minister had included that clause to protect himself, not to protect Dr Richard Madden. The government used commercial confidentiality to avoid answering a series of pertinent questions on the Trade Development Zone. This morning, we have the unprecedented and extraordinary move by the government to put its own matter of public importance before this Assembly. That action is unprecedented in this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, the government has a range of options that it can exercise if it wishes to debate matters. It knows that; we know that. On the other hand, a very limited range of options is open to the opposition. Today, the government has closed off 1 of the opposition's options. This is a dark day indeed for parliamentary democracy in the Northern Territory and the Minister for Education and his colleagues ought to be ashamed of themselves.

These examples indicate that a new era of cloak-and-dagger administration has arrived. The opposition has been thwarted continuously in these sittings in its efforts to secure information and explanations demanded by the population of the Northern Territory and that the population of the Northern Territory can properly expect to receive from its elected government. But, for its own reasons, this elected government has decided that it will not be publicly accountable to the people of the Northern Territory, and it has used this forum as a means to evade meeting its responsibilities rather than to fulfil them.

The government goes immediately on the defensive every time the opposition asks questions and seeks explanations about any matter concerning government spending. It pulls up the drawbridge every time we seek to call it to account. The government has not learnt that it is not playing with its own money. It is spending our money, the money of the taxpayer of the Northern Territory, and the taxpayer has a right to know how that money is being spent.

Mr Speaker, during these sittings, the Assembly has had before it 2 sets of major government financial documents: the budget and the Treasurer's annual financial statements. The budget story is well known. There are numerous glaring anomalies in the budget estimates. Many of the estimates are either wilfully or foolishly unrealistic. They cannot be achieved without further massive increases in taxes and charges which everyone predicts will be imposed in April next year. The committee stage was marked by the complete inability of the Treasurer to handle his job and to answer questions that we gave him notice of. That was demonstrated by the fact that, on this side of the Assembly, we saw more of his back than his front, so often was he consulting the member for Fannie Bay, a previous and, I must say, a competent Treasurer.

Something which is not so well known, which relates to the second major financial statement, concerns the reports of the Auditor-General. This year for the first time, because of the inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of this government, the Auditor-General found it necessary to present 2 reports to parliament. Last year, we received 1 report, which contained the

Auditor-General's Annual Report and the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements. This year, we received an annual report and, a week or so later, the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements Report. In the Auditor-General's words, the government was not able to get the information ready in time.

Mr Speaker, what do you see when you assess the contents of the Auditor-General's report? You discover that the Auditor-General finds that the government could not balance its books for the last financial year. The current balances and investments held were \$107 463 more than shown on the government books. The cash balance showed \$64 214 more than did the books. We can be grateful that, in both instances, the government had more money than it expected to have, but it is still clear that the money and the records do not balance. In such a loose system, the error could as easily have been reversed. The end result was that the books had to be adjusted artificially to make them balance. The books of the Northern Territory government had to be adjusted artificially, a practice that would not be tolerated in a public company let alone in a publicly accountable body using taxpayers' money. It is a scandal that this government, with its resources, cannot balance its books. But that is not the end of the story.

Statement 6 details the government's guarantees and associated contingent liabilities. Contingent liabilities, as we all know, is a very pertinent and burning issue in this Assembly. The government proudly boasts in the foreword to statement 6 that it is a more comprehensive and informative statement than is generally prepared by other governments in Australia. We have heard that so often. The problem with this more comprehensive and informative statement is that we have no idea how accurate it is because the Auditor-General states that he has been unable to form an opinion as to the completeness and accuracy of the information from which statement 6 has been prepared. He is not prepared, in other words, to give statement 6 - which deals with contingent liabilities - a clean bill of health because, for the second year in a row, the government cannot get its act together and provide the information.

Mr Speaker, that is disgraceful and yet another example of this government playing fast and loose with the money of the taxpayer of the Northern Territory. This concerns one of the most controversial areas of government financial dealings - as the honourable member for Barkly knows to his cost - yet, for the second year in a row, the government cannot get it right and cannot obtain the approval of the Auditor-General to show that it has got it right. It cannot provide the information required by the Auditor-General in order for him to make a fair assessment of the extent of this government's contingent liabilities. Mr Speaker, that is shameful. It is disgraceful and it is letting down the Northern Territory taxpayer, to put it very mildly.

And then there is the question of quarterly accounts. The September quarterly accounts are just out. The budget said we would obtain \$1m from casino taxes this financial year. Let us forget for a moment that, if Federal Hotels had been there, we would have obtained \$4m from casino taxes this financial year. But, how much did we receive, Mr Speaker, as a contribution to this \$1m in the July, August and September period - the first 3 months of the financial year? We obtained \$350 in casino taxes paid to the Northern Territory government in the first 3 months of the financial year.

Mr Speaker, that is bad enough. But what is worse is that it cost us at least \$125 000 to collect that amount and to provide regulatory services for the casinos. Not only are the casinos still continuing to enjoy a tax holiday, we are paying for it, not only in terms of forgone income but also in actual income that is spent to ensure that they run a proper show. There is

\$125 000 going out and \$350 has come in. It reminds one of the Trade Development Zone, doesn't it? \$9m is being spent this year on the Trade Development Zone, and \$20 000 will be coming in, Mr Speaker. There are great managers on the other side.

There is also the question of the Territory's level of debt. Despite repeated questions, we have not been able to obtain a clear and unequivocal statement of the Territory's total debt situation. Nowhere is there a statement revealing exactly how much debt all Territorians have been committed to by this government. We know that, in 1984-85, government interest payments were \$507 for each Territorian, \$144 higher than the Australian average. Apparently, during this financial year, we will be paying something higher than that, around \$530.

The opposition accepts that a reasonable level of borrowing to provide community assets for future years is a normal government activity. We have no problem with that. What is worrying is that we have rocketed to first place in the borrowing stakes and, what is worse, there appears to be no end in sight as the government seems to have no idea of any limit to the extent to which it is prepared to borrow. It is a crucial question, Mr Speaker, when you realise that, in 1984-85, out of the \$75m this government borrowed, \$72m went on paying interest on loans. We have reached a state where, if we were in private business, if we were a public company, our shareholders would be asking very serious questions indeed. We have a situation where of \$75m obtained through loans, only \$3m can be used for productive capital asset works or whatever other use it may be put to within the Northern Territory and the vast majority, \$72m, must be used to repay loans that have already been taken out. Worse yet is the fact that the Treasurer does not understand what is going on. He is prepared to borrow more and more while still boasting proudly about a balanced budget and still not telling us if and when we will reach a stage where our loan repayments are greater than the new loans we are obtaining. It would appear from the figures that we are not too far away from that.

I support the Treasurer being in Paris. The further away he is from the Northern Territory's books, the better off we will all be. Bazza in Paris is a much less dangerous animal than Bazza at home.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister will refer to the Treasurer by his correct title.

Mr SMITH: Thank you for that Freudian slip, Mr Speaker. The Treasurer in Paris is a much less dangerous animal than the Treasurer at home.

Speaking of Paris, that is where Dr Richard Madden should have been, with the Treasurer, helping the government to negotiate its Eurodollar loan. Instead, the Territory's Under Treasurer has been sacked, for reasons that have not been disclosed, at a cost to the taxpayer that is not known. The government flatly refuses to tell us how much it cost to get rid of Dr Richard Madden. It flatly refuses to tell us why it got rid of Dr Madden when just a few months ago, the member for Barkly - the previous Chief Minister - said in a press release that Dr Richard Madden was the best Under Treasurer in Australia.

The Chief Minister justifies the decision not to tell the people how much of the taxpayers' money has been given to Dr Richard Madden as a settlement, on the grounds that the government is protecting Dr Madden's privacy. A careful reading of the joint statement issued by the Chief Minister and

Dr Madden indicates, as would be expected of a proper and responsible public servant, that he had no fear of, and no desire to prevent, a full public disclosure of the financial arrangements. Quite disgracefully, the Chief Minister hides behind Dr Madden's supposed sensitivities when it is his own sensitivities that are on trial. We have a right to know about the payout. From any other government in Australia, with the possible exception of Queensland, we would have known the payout figure. It is a pretty sad day when members in this Assembly can compare themselves to those in the Queensland parliament and the way the Queensland government operates. We all know that the Premier of Queensland and his party have a very slight regard indeed for the proprieties of the parliamentary system ...

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable Leader of the Opposition is casting aspersions on parliamentary members in another House in a totally improper manner.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Opposition will withdraw those comments.

Mr SMITH: I withdraw those comments, Mr Speaker.

Northern Territorians have a right to know the payout that was made to Dr Richard Madden. It was our money, Mr Speaker. It was not the Chief Minister's money. It did not come from his piggy-bank. It came from our piggy-bank, and he should tell us what the amount was. Moreover, he should tell us why Dr Richard Madden was sacked in such circumstances that he was paid such a large amount of money. There is one thing you can be sure of, Mr Speaker, and that is that we are talking about a large amount of money.

Then we turn to the great contributions made by the honourable minister for breaking arms and the minister for financial dismemberment of local government. The government tells us times are tough. It says that local government will have to share the tough times, and then it goes about making local government pay for the tough times, almost on its own. The government's concept of sharing amounted to giving the councils a 3% cut, in real terms, when the government itself received a 3% increase, in real terms, in its own funds. To add insult to injury, not only were the councils awarded the cuts, they were notified of them only after the date by which they were legislatively bound to have formulated their budgets.

The effect on councils has been dramatic, and I quote from the NT News a comment from the Town Clerk of Darwin, Mr Storch: 'A combination of very late notification of the cuts and the huge reduction have presented problems'. And I am not surprised. After the Darwin City Council had put its budget together, and struck its rate base, it was informed by the Northern Territory government that it would receive \$500 000 less, in real terms, than it had anticipated.

Mr Speaker, if the Commonwealth government acted towards the Northern Territory government in that manner, all hell would break loose - and deservedly so. But the Northern Territory government is not prepared to give to local governments the level of support and cooperation that it expects to receive from the Commonwealth government. That is a further example of the failure of this government to exercise properly its responsibility for and control and care of the affairs of the Northern Territory.

The government's mania for secrecy is such that the opposition has been criticised for even daring to question aspects of the Trade Development Zone.

It is as if it is some sacred cow about which questions may not be asked. The people of the Northern Territory have every right to know the manner in which the government is attempting to develop the zone, yet the government hides behind a cloak of confidentiality. A government with nothing to hide has nothing to fear from questions. Mr Speaker, our concern and the public's concern with the operation of the Trade Development Zone so far centre on 2 issues. The opposition has no problem with open and aboveboard incentives that are provided fairly to all. However, we object to secret payouts, issued selectively to a favoured few. It is not good enough for the government to hide behind a cloak of confidentiality. Territory taxpayers have a right to know where their money is going. Territory exporters are entitled to know what subsidies are being offered to others and why they are not entitled to similar subsidies.

Of course, cash subsidies are not the only benefits bestowed by the government on a lucky few; some are awarded monopoly positions, secret monopolies that Territorians are not supposed to know about.

The opposition objects also to the government's lack of due care and responsibility in paying money to consultants without a legal guarantee that letters of intent are binding.

Mr Hanrahan: We can prove you wrong on that one.

Mr SMITH: You've got your legal opinion now, have you?

Mr Hanrahan: Had it for weeks.

Mr SMITH: You have had it for weeks? You mean you misled the Assembly yesterday? That is an interesting little argument.

Mr Hanrahan: No one was but you.

Mr SMITH: What is worse is that the minister did not bother to find out whether the letters of intent have any legal standing.

Mr Speaker, this motion is about issues of vital importance to the public. It is about the quality of government and the honesty of government. Open governments are governments that have nothing to hide, and nothing to fear. The exercise of power, as we all know, should be subject to checks and controls. This Assembly is the elected check and control but this Assembly has met a steady refusal from the government to explain itself on many issues. The issues arise daily, and it is a poor and sorry state of affairs for the Territory that the government continues to act as if it has an absolute and almost divine right to make decisions and to take actions, without accounting for itself in any way. I remind the government that every cent it spends is public money. It is taken from the pockets of ordinary Territorians and, to be fair, ordinary Australians and it is not only a moral but a bounden duty on the government to account for that money and, to account for it publicly in this Assembly.

There is a second duty, and that is to manage the Territory's finances in a way that protects and progresses the interests and welfare of all Territorians. Responsible management of the Northern Territory is a tall order and one, I am sad to say, that seems to be way beyond the grasp of this government. How can the public have any confidence in a government that cannot even manage a herd of buffalo? How can a whole herd of buffalo simply vanish? We have the case of the vanishing buffalo at Annaburroo, matched only

by the magically multiplying cattle of Oolloo, and it would be funny if it were not so serious. It is serious because perhaps the Northern Territory taxpayer has lost close to \$1m because of government ineptitude on those 2 deals.

At Annaburroo, we seem to have lost a prize breeding herd, an integral part of the grand plan for a buffalo industry. It has just disappeared. We do not know where it is. The Minister for Lands is not prepared to tell us because the police are still looking at the matter. We are left in the dark and it is only one of many examples of where we have been left in the dark. On the other hand, the government, in selling off a mustering contract at Oolloo, understated the numbers so greatly that the contract cost the taxpayer about \$0.75m in lost revenue.

We all know these are hard times. The Treasurers, both Northern Territory and federal, are at pains to tell us how hard things are. It is in hard times that, traditionally, there is a greater need for assistance to the poor, yet effectively this government has reduced the welfare budget by about \$600 000. That decision is a clear statement of this government's attitude to the needy and those who require real support and assistance. The community assistance programs cover areas of much concern to this Assembly, such as youth services, material assistance, crisis intervention, child protection and rehabilitation for child offenders. Mr Speaker, need I go on? We can afford lavish fees for foreign consultants but we cannot afford to maintain real levels of expenditure for those Territorians who need them most. It is a case of priorities in tough times and, unfortunately, the lower-income people of the Northern Territory know where the government's priorities are.

The Chief Minister has shown clearly his desire to dodge issues and duck his responsibility to manage his Cabinet. His is a record of complete ignorance and incompetence. I will use only recent examples. The Minister for Health embroiled the government in a major controversy over the letting of an aero-medical contract. The Minister for Lands lost a herd of buffalo at Annaburroo. Anywhere else in Australia, with the possible exception of Queensland, ministers would lose their jobs for that level of incompetence. What happens in the Northern Territory? Ministers do not lose their jobs; public servants get a kick. What has happened to the concept of ministerial responsibility when things go wrong?

Mr B. Collins: It never existed here.

Mr SMITH: It never existed here, says the member for Arafura. Certainly, it does not exist under the stewardship of the present Chief Minister. If things go wrong, kick the poor old public servant. Do not kick the minister, because that might be too embarrassing politically. Mr Speaker, if you are going to run a tight and effective ship, you sometimes have to kick ministers. I put it to you that we have had 2 good examples recently where 2 ministers should have been kicked and, in fact, should have had their portfolios removed from them.

This government is accountable. It is not giving us that account. It is not performing in a manner that even acknowledges that accountability. This is entirely unsatisfactory and deserves the censure of this Assembly. These sittings of the Assembly have been nothing but a continual display of showmanship. They have presented nothing but an exhibition of creative avoidance on the part of the government. It has paraded and postured and attempted to draw public attention away from the real issues. It has attempted to focus on grand projects and yet it cannot or will not account in



any way for its lack of control over government activities. It is completely careless about the welfare and the well-being of ordinary Territorians. It has demonstrated this by refusing to provide information and camouflaging the whole thing behind dramatic and emotive performances in this Assembly. Whilst this might be entertaining, it does absolutely nothing to explain or account for the government's wilful and entirely inappropriate refusal to deal with the affairs of the Northern Territory in a responsible and careful manner.

This government is not to be trusted with the responsibility of government until it understands that along with power comes accountability and that that accountability can be exercised only in this parliament. This lack of accountability has been clearly demonstrated by the manner in which real facts and information have been withheld from this Assembly. Collectively, the government has shown an amazing ineptitude and incapacity over the last few weeks. Any one of the issues that I have mentioned would have toppled ministers in any other place. Here, they blunder along in ignorance of their responsibilities, with contempt for the trust placed in them by the people and with total scorn for a system that ensures our freedoms. For this brashness and arrogance, Mr Speaker, they stand condemned. For their willingness to govern without principles, they stand censured.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, while listening to the Leader of the Opposition, my mind was cast back to my early days at kindergarten. I heard a story which has left me all these years, Mr Speaker, but it has just come back. It was the story of Chicken Little. As I remember it, the story went something like this. Chicken Little was walking under a tree and an acorn fell off and landed on his head. Chicken Little took great fright. 'The sky is falling in', he said. He ran off looking for someone to tell this to and he found Henny Penny. 'Henny Penny', said Chicken Little, 'the sky is falling in'.

Mr Smith: Is this a 30-minute story?

Mr MANZIE: So then Henny Penny and Chicken Little went off together looking for other people ...

Mr B. Collins: This isn't even creative.

Mr MANZIE: ... and they spread this story right throughout the animal kingdom. That story has about as much relevance as what the Leader of the Opposition has said in here today. The only connection is that of scaremongering based on no facts whatsoever.

The honourable member said that the government will not give any information in this Assembly. Mr Speaker, we have an Appropriation Bill. I would ask all people in the community who have an interest in this debate to have a look through Hansard and see how the opposition approached that particular debate. I do not think any question was put to the Minister for Health by any opposition member regarding any aspect of appropriations for health. In respect of the Minister for Community Development, I think there might have been 1 line in the appropriation debate. That is the time for asking questions about money and about the way in which the government is heading. They do not even ask questions. These guys have got to be kidding, Mr Speaker. They are trying to tell the community ...

Mr Ede: You never answer the questions.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Stuart will cease his interjections and the honourable minister will be heard in silence.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, they are trying to convince the community that they are fair dinkum and they will not even discuss finance at the appropriate time. I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that I was grilled pretty heavily about my areas of responsibility. It was a sham.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): A point of order, Mr Speaker! I rise on the matter of privilege. In an interjection in the Assembly this morning, the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications responded to a comment made by the Leader of the Opposition regarding a legal opinion on the enforceability or otherwise of the letters of intent - and, I might add, these will have serious ultimate financial impacts on the budgets of this Assembly. I quote him precisely - and this simply confirms private advice I have just had from him by crossing the floor: 'I have had the legal opinion on this matter for weeks'.

Mr Speaker, I would refer you to a question put in this Assembly in question time on Tuesday 25 November 1986. The question was from the Leader of the Opposition:

Mr Speaker, my question is a follow-up to my earlier question. Has he received the legal opinion that he has asked for on the letters of intent and, if so, what are the contents of that legal opinion and, if he has not received a legal opinion, when does he expect to do so?

The answer given by the honourable minister was quite emphatic and specific, as specific as his answer this morning. 'As yet I have not received the legal advice that I sought. In future, I intend to be very careful indeed about any information that I give to the Leader of the Opposition because, quite frankly, I do not trust him'.

Mr Speaker, the statement he made in the Assembly this morning flatly contradicts the answer given in question time only 48 hours ago in this Assembly. There appears to be a prima facie case that the honourable minister misled this Assembly in question time. Mr Speaker, I would ask you to refer this matter to the Privileges Committee.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I am quite happy to have this presumably major motion of censure from the opposition interrupted by the reference to the Privileges Committee, because I crossed the floor to tell the honourable member for Arafura exactly what I did say. He has the presumption to announce to this Assembly that I said to him something that I did not say. That is remarkable.

Mr B. Collins: It will be in Hansard.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Arafura was heard in silence. The honourable member will allow other members the same courtesy.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition was referring to a legal opinion, I interjected that I had had an opinion for weeks. I have had an opinion for weeks, Mr Speaker.

Mr B. Collins: That is not what you said.

Mr HANRAHAN: It is exactly what I said. I confirm, for the member for Arafura, that I also said here that I received a legal opinion yesterday. He has made a rather frivolous reference to the Privileges Committee because previously I was not referring to a legal opinion. As I have said quite often, I have had an opinion for weeks. That opinion was confirmed legally yesterday.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, to conclude my reference of this matter, we have here the very undignified situation of a minister ducking for cover, behind Hansard presumably. I would simply say to you, Mr Speaker, that there is a prima facie case - and that is all I am saying - for the matter to be investigated. I have no doubt that the Hansard master tape will show that the minister said precisely what I suggested he did.

Mr SPEAKER: I advise honourable members that I will consider the question of privilege and advise the Assembly of my decision later.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, it is certainly interesting to see just how important the opposition thinks its censure motion is. We might have another break a little bit later on.

The Leader of the Opposition did not organise the opposition's time effectively in the process of the budget debate. That debate is set aside specifically for the Assembly to go through the budget item by item. He has made a few crazy statements such as his comment that the figures are rubbery. We have heard nothing concrete, just airy-fairy stuff. The opposition does not want any facts because the facts might spoil a good story. I will now set out the facts for the Leader of the Opposition. I will show that the information is available for the asking on every matter that he raised.

He gave us a story about the Auditor-General's annual statements, telling us that things were very bad because there were 2 reports, yet the opposition has never asked one question of the Treasurer or myself in the Assembly seeking any clarification of these matters because the facts might spoil the story. The opposition would not have anything to talk about. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I turn to page 1 of the annual report of the Auditor-General as it was tabled in this Assembly. I will read the last paragraph because I think it is pertinent. This is the report that is so evil because it has been broken into 2 parts and so is all disaster and cloak-and-dagger stuff. I quote:

Practical considerations, including printing arrangements, timing, and convenience of reference, which favour the separate binding of my reports have contributed to the decision to take this initiative which, whilst not detracting from the information previously available will, I believe, assist in placing the Treasurer's annual financial statements in the same stand-alone context as that applying to the annual financial statements of prescribed statutory corporations and others.

That certainly is an indication of real evil intent, skulduggery and cloak-and-dagger stuff, Mr Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition has not even read the report yet he tried to use it in this debate to show us how clever he is. He needs to get his script writer to do a bit of reading before he writes anything else for him. It might pay him to read rather more of the report, Mr Speaker. We might go through the Auditor-General's report, because obviously the honourable member is having something of a problem with it. We could run through items that might set the honourable member's mind at rest. That might protect us from hearing more of his waffle.

Mr Speaker, let us turn to the first paragraph that is causing concern, paragraph 3.8.5 on page 22. It relates to asset procurement and accounting in the Northern Territory Treasury:

At the request of the accountable officer, a review of asset procurement and accounting procedures was conducted. A number of breakdowns in internal control and instances of noncompliance with prescribed requirements were identified. The accountable officer indicated action taken and proposed to remedy the deficiencies.

Mr Speaker, the audit was conducted at the request of the Under Treasurer. A number of breakdowns in procedures were identified and brought to the attention of the Under Treasurer. Treasury conducted a review of the existing procedures and introduced changes with regard to the control and recording of purchases as required. As well, staff changes were made and internal control checks strengthened in the purchasing area. A reply, outlining these changes and others proposed for implementation, was sent to the Auditor-General. The accounting and property manual relating to that area of Treasury has been revised. That is the first area that received some criticism and that is what is occurring.

Let us look at paragraph 3.8.6: 'A number of weaknesses in internal control were brought to the attention of the accountable officer. In response the department has detailed remedial action taken and proposed'. The Treasury has noted the Auditor-General's comments with regard to the weaknesses identified. And this is the action. Payee reconciliation reports were not being reviewed regularly. A new duty statement has been prepared to assign responsibility to the examiner to review the reconciliation report. The sequence of central audit reports was not being checked regularly to ensure all reports were being received and that follow-ups of rejected reports were made. Salaries staff have been made aware of ensuring the receipt of all such reports and the follow-up work required on rejected reports. There was a lack of written procedures to be followed in the payment of salaries, particularly the distribution of cash pays. Procedures have now been documented.

The next item causing some concern appears in paragraph 3.8.7: conversion to the replacement computerised accounting system. I will leave it for honourable members to read that particular paragraph on page 22, and I will go through what is being done in response to that comment after highlighting of the problems associated with the partial conversion of the government accounting system from INTAS to the new SI ledger system. This is what has occurred.

Mr Speaker, 10 departments transferred to the new government accounting system on 1 July 1985. The decision to have a new system was reached by a steering committee of which the Public Service Commissioner and the Under Treasurer were co-chairmen. Other members were the Secretaries of the Departments of Education, Lands, Health and Transport and Works. The decision was based on the advice of the Public Service Commissioner that the existing INTAS system was not capable of further modifications due to lack of documentation. Under those circumstances - that is, the lack of proper documentation - had the INTAS system fallen over, there was a strong likelihood that government accounting would have come to a standstill for unacceptable periods. The Software International package was selected and, even though there were recognised weaknesses in the system for the production of adequate reports for government purposes, it was decided, with the Treasurer's approval, to implement the new system.

Mr Speaker, 10 departments transferred to the new system. The bank reconciliation system provided in the SI package was found to be defective for the government's purposes and an interim program had to be introduced. However, the reports produced by that system could not be used readily in the reconciliation process and considerable time and effort was needed to check the reports. Lack of a cheque production system added to problems in the reconciliation process. After recognising the seriousness of the situation, Treasury brought staff from elsewhere in the department and allocated them to the ASC to complete the bank reconciliation. In early August, when all the checking was completed and the imbalance considerably reduced, agreement was reached with the Auditor-General to close off the books as at 30 June, and procedures for checking reports and recruitment of staff, at the appropriate levels, are now in place to avoid a similar situation occurring in the future. As well, a preliminary review of the ASC has been completed with a view to further improving its operations.

The Auditor-General also reported a lack of adequate training and allocation of responsibility in the ASC during the year, and the fact that staff from the ASC and relevant user departments were seconded to the government accounting system's project group to undergo training in the new system prior to introduction. The department has initiated group meetings with the user departments on a regular basis to identify and resolve those emerging problems.

The only task that is not fully completed and resolved in relation to the Auditor-General's report is the bank reconciliation, and my advice is that this is very close to finalisation. The changeover to the new system caused problems, and they have all been rectified. The Leader of the Opposition had the audacity to suggest that this was an evil, cloak-and-dagger, undercover system. He suggested, more or less, that the people involved were engaged in some sort of illegal activity which they were trying to cover up. That was an absolutely vile suggestion, Mr Speaker, and it should not receive any credence whatsoever.

Mr Leo interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Nhulunbuy will withdraw his most unparliamentary remark.

Mr LEO: I most humbly withdraw it, Mr Speaker.

Mr MANZIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am very glad to see the honourable member for Nhulunbuy behaving in a humble manner. It befits him.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition ran through a list of matters. He said that the government was accountable. I do not know what he calls a democratic system where the government has to be elected by the people. How accountable can you get?

Mr B. Collins: A lot more.

Mr MANZIE: The member would not have a clue about accountability. The Leader of the Opposition has to account to these 5, because his job is on the line and he is not doing too well at it. Maybe he will improve. I wish him well. The Leader of the Opposition said that the government tries to cover up ...

Mr B. Collins: You are not one of those after your boss' job, I know that. There's Don Dale ...

Mr MANZIE: Oh, I hear the member for Arafura - the pseudo leader.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MANZIE: I would be quiet if I were him. He is spoiling the poor old Leader of the Opposition's ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will address his comments through the Chair, and the interjections from the opposition will cease.

Mr MANZIE: I am sorry, Mr Speaker. Actually, I was trying to help the Leader of the Opposition because he is being overshadowed by the member for Arafura. However, he can suffer, Mr Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition ran through a few things which he said demonstrated the government's attempts at preventing accountability. He said the government hid behind the sub judice rule. He can read Pettifer as well as anyone else can. What is worse is that he is disputing a ruling that has been made by the Speaker, which I find a most abominable process and he should be censured for it. Mr Speaker, you made the decision and there is no reason for anyone to question it. Possibly, he thinks that he is better than anyone else. Then he named a police investigation as something that we undertook to cover up something. How ridiculous can he get? How can the government cover up anything that the police are investigating? He has a strange idea of what investigations are all about. Again, maybe he will learn as time goes on.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to commercial confidence. What an evil thing: hiding behind commercial confidence. It is obvious that he has never bought and sold anything nor been involved in any sort of commercial transaction. You do not go out telling people the details of a commercial transaction, especially while you are in the process of negotiating it or developing it. How ridiculous! What a crazy suggestion to make - that the government is hiding behind commercial confidentiality. That is absolutely ridiculous, but again it does not worry him. It sounded good. The script-writer wrote it, so he said it.

His next suggestion really takes the cake. He referred to the unprecedented step the government took by having the audacity to suggest that it would like to debate a matter of public importance. This is supposed to be the Territory parliament. This is the area where matters of importance to Territorians should be discussed. Indeed, it is the proper place. The Leader of the Opposition says we should not do it. The government cannot have anything important to talk about. What a load of garbage! If it were not for the government, things would not be happening in the Territory. It is only because we address ourselves to questions of importance - and solve them - that things get done in the Territory. According to him, we should be leaving it alone. I will not cover that comment any further because it was ridiculous.

Then we had the old story of contingent liabilities. If we cast our minds back, we have heard it all before. Every year, we hear this sort of thing. We have heard it in the context that there must be a public accounts committee because there is all this evil stuff that the government is doing and the Assembly must find out about it. We have the Public Accounts Committee and, therefore, the opposition has hooked into something else. It

has hooked into a censure motion saying that the government is covering up. I do not know what he wants but he is not going to get it because the government is dealing with the processes of the parliament, the Public Accounts Committee, the presentation of a budget and the passage of an Appropriation Bill through the Assembly. We are doing everything correctly but members opposite want someone to sit down with them, hold their hands and write all these little things down. It will not happen; they will have to do a bit of work for themselves. We have had numerous statements on contingent liabilities. All I can say is that the suggestion that they are somehow evil is something that should be refuted - and I will refute it. Every state government has contingent liabilities, and properly so. We know the Victorian government, quite properly, is supporting the development of an aluminium smelter, various buildings, Spring Towers and art centres. The smelter alone is a \$600m liability, but it is an appropriate liability for a government to undertake in the development of a state.

The Western Australian government has \$2000m to \$3000m in the gas pipeline alone. In New South Wales and Tasmania, the governments are involved in liability transactions. In South Australia, the Hilton and the Grand Prix are quite properly underwritten by the government. The Queensland government has contingent liabilities.

The Territory government, quite properly, has contingent liabilities. We have them because we are developing the Territory. We are talking about expenditure of about \$26m to create employment, directly and indirectly, for 5800 people. If we employed that many people in the public service, it would cost the Territory taxpayer \$110m a year. This \$26m is creating jobs, development and tourism. Our tourism growth has increased dramatically, but that does not matter to those people. 'Development' is a dirty word. 'Innovative' is a dirty word. We have all this cloak-and-dagger stuff about the government's involvement in spending money, encouraging development and attracting people here. That is terrible because the more innovative people who come here, the more people there are who support our style of government and the more clearly the Leader of the Opposition sees his opportunities of ever obtaining power in this Assembly diminishing.

Casino taxes are another furphy. We had a statement in the Assembly from the Treasurer before he left for overseas to carry out the most important task of unlocking \$35 000m worth of exports for the whole of the country. That goes over their heads; they denigrate the Treasurer. History will show who should be denigrated. The Treasurer has informed this Assembly quite specifically that, as of 1 October, the casino at Mindil Beach will be paying tax. The Leader of the Opposition quoted the figure for the quarter until September as nil tax. Of course, there is nil tax. He was told that the tax would start on 1 October. He probably did not listen; he never listens to what is said in here. He does not read Hansard or anything that is put in front of him. Nevertheless, he tries to accuse the government of failing to inform the opposition. Do a bit of homework!

Mr Hatton: Stay in the Assembly for a while.

Mr MANZIE: Yes that is another thing. He should stay in the Assembly and listen to what is going on.

The level of debt was the other big furphy we heard about. Primary school children can understand the economic system of government considerably better than the Leader of the Opposition even though he taught in primary school for some time. He probably could have learnt more from his pupils than he actually taught them.

Let us have a look at the level of debt. We have this furphy, this terrible per capita figure that we owe twice or three times as much per capita as people in the rest of the country. I will run through the per capita expenditure figures.

In respect of education, we spend \$57 per head compared to South Australia's \$18 per head or New South Wales' \$26 per head. Therefore, we spend twice as much per head on education. In relation to health, the figures are: Northern Territory - \$35; New South Wales - \$11; Victoria - \$25; and South Australia - \$21. For housing and community development, the figures are: \$309 in the Territory; \$61 in New South Wales; \$51 in Victoria; and \$87 in South Australia. This is the evil government that has cut down welfare spending! We have a long way to go; we would have to cut it 5 times before we spent as little per capita as New South Wales. That is probably what members opposite want us to do. Our expenditure on roads is \$510 per head against \$92 in Victoria. In other words, our per capita expenditure is far greater than that in any other place in Australia and, accordingly, our per capita debt is higher.

Let us have a look at that furphy too. What debts does the average person have? He has a house and a car. He may have a \$70 000 or \$80 000 debt. His expenditure might be \$300 or \$400 a week or a month. There is no relevance in the way the Leader of the Opposition used figures in relation to the Territory economy. He talks absolute rubbish to try to scare people. All he has going for him is his attempts to scare. People are fully aware of the inadequacies of his arguments.

The opposition raised a discussion of a matter of public importance on local government expenditure. I do not need to say very much about this. The NT News carried an editorial which was quite specific about funding from the government to the Darwin City Council in relation to the staffing and expenditures of the council. Times are tough, as has been said in this Assembly, and we do not have the amount of money we would like. The government is going through a process of shedding positions in the public service. Obviously, the municipal governments must follow suit. Times are tough. They will have to economise. They will have to try to do more with less, the same as other governments around the country are doing and as individual people have to. The average wage-earner's dollar does not go anywhere near as far as it used to before the Hawke government got into power. People are waking up to that as well.

The Minister for Community Development covered quite adequately all those false assertions made by the Leader of the Opposition. His discussion of that matter of public importance was full of totally inadequate arguments and he has raised them again in an effort to score points. People will read Hansard. They will know what has been said and they will know that the Leader of the Opposition is talking garbage.

I will not say very much about the Trade Development Zone except that it is a great development. It is a great concept and it is one that will prove very successful for the Northern Territory and for Territorians in the future. It is a project that shows initiative and thought for the future. It is programmed to provide development and jobs in the Territory. We know that development and the creation of employment are things the opposition cannot stand. It is too busy worrying about who is in the left wing and who is in the right wing and who will be pushing for the leadership. We are creating jobs and development and we are doing that very successfully. If anybody looks at the statistics showing the growth of employment in the Territory, they will see that it is astounding. We will keep it that way.



What of this furphy about Annaburroo? The minister gave a very detailed answer which is recorded in Hansard. Maybe the opposition was not in the Assembly at question time last week. I have a copy of the minister's answer. It is 2 pages long and full of detail. I invite the Leader of the Opposition to read it.

Mr Smith: Where are the buffalo?

Mr MANZIE: Digest it. Don't just cast your eyes over it; comprehend it.

Our expenditure on welfare is 5 times greater per capita than that of New South Wales. This year, the amount may be down slightly. It may not have got through the Leader of the Opposition's head but maybe, just maybe, there is less need for welfare in the Territory now. Maybe there are enough jobs around for people to be able to find work. Maybe there is enough prosperity for people to get off their backsides, earn some money and pay their way. Maybe there is a lesser need for welfare expenditure. Has the Leader of the Opposition ever thought about that? Obviously, the ideal is to have no welfare expenditure because the economy is working so well that it is not needed. He would not think about that, would he? He is against the creation of anything that may provide employment for Territory school leavers and, believe me, since self-government we have created more jobs per year than we have had school leavers. Let the Leader of the Opposition show me anywhere else that that has occurred.

Mr Smith: Victoria.

Mr MANZIE: Right. You give me the figures. I want to hear about this. I am sure that, in terms of welfare, people in the Territory who are in the unfortunate position of either being unable to work or on pensions of some sort, know that the Territory government has led the rest of Australia in relation to assistance to such people. People who are on pensions legitimately and who are unable to work are catered for very well in the Territory. Our welfare system is better than that in any state. The Leader of the Opposition might like to talk to the Chairman of the Council on the Ageing or the President of the Pensioners' Association. These people have considerable experience and might be able to tell him how much better off people are here because of the progressive policies of this government. We are fair dinkum. We are not airy-fairy like the Labor Party.

Before I conclude, I want to reiterate that this government's goal is to develop the Northern Territory and make it a better place for all Territorians to live in. That will not be achieved by crawling around in the background trying to pick faults in every little thing. It will be done by getting out there and getting stuck into things by being brave and by taking on projects with a bit of vision. We look around at the rest of the country and we see what has happened. We see what Labor policies have done. They have brought this country to its knees and made it a banana republic. Mr Speaker, 10 years ago, could you have imagined Australia being described to the rest of the world as a banana republic? And by our own Treasurer! It is absolutely appalling, but that is what the ALP has effected in record time. It took it 3 years to ruin one of the most productive countries in the world. It wants to introduce those sort of policies in the Northern Territory. We will not have anything of it! We will continue the way we are going because we have growth, development and a better place to live for all Territorians.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I do not know how 1 man can yell such rubbish for so long to so little effect. He started by telling us a fairy

tale. I could not work out where the fairy tale stopped. I think it finished about 10 seconds ago.

I will take the minister's statement about a banana republic first. He actually finished by contradicting himself and so indicated the ridiculousness of his own statement. He maintained that, within 3 years, a Labor government had turned Australia into a banana republic when he knows full well that it was the movement in the terms of trade that led to that statement being made. Those terms of trade came about because, over 20 to 30 years, conservative governments refused to develop a manufacturing system in this country which could actually compete with third world countries.

Mr Manzie: We cannot compete with them now. That is the problem.

Mr EDE: Exactly, and that is the point. Who would want to compete with them? Who would want Australia to have the wages system and the big differential between the rich and the poor which characterises those countries? If that is what members opposite are aiming for, let them stand up and say so. Let them say that they want to condemn the people of the Northern Territory to third-world conditions, that they want them to live on the wages of Tanzania. If that is what they are on about, let them say so.

The Attorney-General tried to maintain that we were not getting our facts straight. Our basic point is absolutely true and irrefutable. This is the government that could not balance its books. When the Auditor-General signed the report, in compliance with the Financial Administration and Audit Act, he had to state that he had attempted to audit the books but that, on 30 June 1986, actual current balance investments were \$107 463 in excess of the amounts shown on the books for the Consolidated Fund and relevant trust account. He had to transfer that \$107 463 until the composition of the imbalance was identified. In other words, there was a qualification on the audit, something that is dreaded by any public or private company anywhere in Australia and something that is dreaded by any community organisation because it knows that that can be the basis upon which its funding may be cut or cease altogether. In a public company, it is the sort of thing that would have the shareholders calling for the resignation of the board of directors, and rightly so, because it could not carry out its most basic function - the control of shareholders' funds. This government has shown that it cannot control the funds that are placed in its trust.

However, the Auditor-General did not make just 1 qualification. Let us have a look at the next one. Let us look at the actual bank reconciliation, the cash book, the most simple and basic form of account - the one which you make sure you get right because, if it is not right, you start to wonder who has been fiddling the till. The actual cash balances were out by \$64 214!

Mr Dondas: Out of what?

Mr EDE: The Minister for Lands interjects, 'Out of what?' I think he is trying to say that \$64 214 is a mere bagatelle, something that we should not worry about particularly. He has much bigger things to worry about, so why worry about \$64 000? That is the minister's attitude to his own ministry. We know that. We have seen that, at Annaburroo, he does not even have his staff count the buffalo. He does not know how many were out there in the first place. He does not know where they went. He does not care and will not answer any questions. If \$64 000 is nothing to worry about, why should he worry about \$0.25m worth of buffalo?

Mr Dondas: It was not \$0.25m worth of buffalo to start with. That is how much of a goose you are.

Mr EDE: He does not know how many buffalo were there in the first place. It was not my responsibility to find out how many were there; it was the minister's responsibility. He was the person responsible for that.

Mr Speaker, as I said, \$64 214 had to be transferred into miscellaneous revenue because the government could not balance its cash book.

The acting Treasurer said that contingent liabilities were of no consequence, and that they were something that we ought not to be worried about. What did he say? He said he did not know what we wanted, but we would not be getting it. That was his attitude to responsible government.

Let us have a look at the qualification in the audit report. The Auditor-General stated:

The accuracy of information provided by prescribed statutory corporations in statement 6 can only be properly assessed at the conclusion of the audit of the 1985-86 statements of these corporations. Not all of those audits had been completed at the date of this report.

In this report, 3 fundamental areas were qualified. This government should be utterly ashamed of itself. The Treasurer should resign. As we said earlier, it may be cheaper for us to maintain him in Paris. Obviously, he is unable to run his department. It is a disgrace and I do not know what more we can say. I do not think we need anything more than that to justify this censure motion.

I will go on to a couple of other points. The acting Treasurer states that responsible government is simply a matter of getting elected and then serving out your term, as though we live under some form of elected dictatorship or possibly a presidential system. Clearly, he does not know the difference in forms of government. He does not know that we have a Westminster system under which his responsibility is to this Assembly and the individual members of this Assembly who are, in turn, responsible to the people who elect them. That is the form of government that we have. That is the fundamental principle. This government is not a corporate identity. It is responsible to this Assembly and to the members of this Assembly, and the members of this Assembly are responsible to their electorates. That is the principle. It is not enough for him to turn around and say that he does not know what we want, but that we are not going to get it. He referred to the Trade Development Zone, and told us all about this great development - the big picture - which we should not worry about.

Tourism and national parks are the great generators of wealth in the Northern Territory. They have the potential to give a real boost to our economy and to keep it moving ahead for many years into the future. They can keep us moving forever because they are a great renewable resource. Honourable members and the general public need go no further than the record of these sittings of the Legislative Assembly to find ample demonstration that this government is not exercising responsibility, control and care in the affairs of the Territory. It is a matter of record that the first item of government business in this Assembly in the current sittings was a motion from the Chief Minister. That motion would have this Assembly adopt the view that stage 2 of Kakadu National Park does not meet the stringent criteria laid down

by UNESCO for the inclusion of areas on the World Heritage List. Accordingly, this Assembly was asked to condemn Commonwealth government efforts to secure World Heritage listing for this area of Kakadu. How disgraceful! We pointed out the simple fact that it would be extremely premature to debate such a motion until all members were given time to familiarise themselves with the very complex criteria adopted by UNESCO.

As members will recall, the member for Arafura moved an amendment that:

all consideration by this Assembly of matters relating to the listing of stage 2 of Kakadu National Park on the World Heritage List be postponed until the Minister for Conservation tables in this Assembly the UNESCO documents detailing the stringent criteria for World Heritage listing; a detailed briefing relating to the presence or otherwise of these criteria in stage 2 of the park; and the submission, together with attached documents, including videos, which it is intended to present to UNESCO in opposition to the listing of stage 2 of the park on the World Heritage list; and until all members of this Assembly have undertaken detailed inspections of stage 2 of the park.

We are all aware that members opposite showed that time and good sense wait for no CLP government. It is a matter of record that the amendment was defeated and that the government used its weight of numbers to have the motion adopted.

The debate showed clearly that the amendment moved by the member for Arafura was a reasoned one because key government members demonstrated an appalling ignorance of essential facts. The Ministers for Conservation and Mines and Energy and the member for Sadadeen demonstrated that they were not even familiar with the park's boundaries. They did not know where the park was. The Minister for Conservation said that he knew where the boundaries were yet he was the person who thought Nabarlek was in the park.

Mr McCarthy: I did not say a word like that.

Mr EDE: Have a look at Hansard. The Minister for Conservation is the person who described Kakadu as 20 000 km<sup>2</sup> of scrub.

Mr McCarthy: I said a percentage of it was.

Mr EDE: He was the only government member who addressed the UNESCO criteria, but he told us that there were 4. In fact, there are 12.

Mr McCarthy: There were 4 that were significant.

Mr EDE: There were 4 that were significant! The minister has decided that he will redefine the UNESCO criteria now. He failed to mention the cultural criteria. He thought those insignificant. Obviously, he does not place any importance on 40 000 years of Aboriginal heritage.

The member for Sadadeen told the Assembly - not once, but 3 times - that the Nabarlek uranium mine was in stage 1 of Kakadu National Park. In fact, the mine is in Arnhem Land. It is more than 40 km from the nearest park boundary. Some may consider that the member's ignorance is excusable because he represents an Alice Springs electorate. I would remind everyone that, for some years, he has been the Chairman of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly Sessional Committee on the Environment. Among other things, that

committee is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the Alligator Rivers uranium province.

Mr D.W. Collins: That is the one that contains Nabarlek.

Mr EDE: The member for Sadadeen has visited this area on many occasions over the years but obviously he walks around with his eyes shut.

The Minister for Mines and Energy made it plain to anyone who cared to listen that he wanted all stages of the park mined. However, the Chief Minister told the Assembly that his government categorically supported the World Heritage listing of stage 1 of the park. Both have stated that mining would affect only 1% of the park even if all areas were mined. It probably does not concern them, but it is a fact that a bullet between the eyes only affects 1% of a person's face, but it does stop him in his tracks pretty readily. Both of them would have the effect of stopping tourism dead in its tracks. Of course, a person needs to have more than sawdust in his head to appreciate that fact.

This government is causing serious damage to our tourist industry by publicly denigrating the conservation values of Kakadu National Park. The booming tourist demand for Kakadu was never illustrated better than by the Minister for Tourism during debate in the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill. Mr Speaker, as you would be aware, the first half of the film 'Crocodile Dundee' consists largely of shots of breathtaking scenery from Kakadu National Park. During the budget debate, the Minister for Tourism was asked if he had any information of results stemming from the 'Crocodile Dundee' promotion which the NT Tourist Commission is running to coincide with the extraordinary success of the movie in America. The minister said that the response to that promotion in America had been overwhelming. The response to a competition offering a return trip to Kakadu, which was run on the top 60 United States radio stations, was unparalleled. We were told also that all flights leaving the west coast of the United States to all ports in Australia were fully booked.

The member for Jingili told the Assembly that recently he had a conversation with a hotel manager in Darwin who said he had been receiving telephone calls from the United States asking how far Kakadu is from Darwin. The Minister for Tourism informed us that the Northern Territory tourist authorities simply could not cope physically with inquiries and people wanting to make bookings. He said the Northern Territory Tourist Commission had only 1 office in Los Angeles to service the whole of the United States continent and that 1 person in the United States handles the market for the whole of America plus Canada. A movie, shot largely in Kakadu National Park, has become a No 1 box office hit in America, the toughest market in the world, and grossed more than \$100m. Despite that, we have only 1 person dealing with a potential 260 million American and Canadian tourists screaming to get to Kakadu.

The honourable minister went on to tell the Assembly that he was attempting to convince his Cabinet colleagues to provide more money in the interest of tourism. I would suggest that he better not hold his breath or we will be having a by-election in Flynn. 'Crocodile Dundee' is not a No 1 box office hit in the Chan Building. There it is 'Uranium Dundee' starring that well-known conservationist, Harry Butler. That is the name we have given to the video which the Northern Territory government filmed in Kakadu to go to UNESCO to argue its case for the destruction of Kakadu. It is clearly a case of 'Crocodile Dundee' versus 'Uranium Dundee' and the Geopeko push.

It is hard to comprehend that millions of Americans are standing around in front of hundreds of cinemas talking about the crocodiles and billabongs of this place called Kakadu as they wait to join millions of other Americans who have seen the movie everyone is talking about while, on the other side of the Atlantic, this government has a man running around with his own little home-made video called 'Uranium Dundee' arguing for the destruction of Kakadu.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister has been telling people outside this Assembly that mining is not an issue with Kakadu; it is state rights ...

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There are too many interjections. I remind honourable members that the honourable member will be heard in silence.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, let there be no doubt that this is about mining. The World Heritage listing for Kakadu has been opposed for one purpose and one purpose alone: to open all areas of the park to mining. That is the result the government wants to achieve. In that video, Harry Butler tells us that Kakadu should remain a national park, but that it should not be placed on the World Heritage List. He is a disgrace. The man should be dismissed from the Board of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. The man is not fit to represent ...

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has spent the last 15 minutes discussing the merits, as he sees them, of Kakadu and of mining in the park. We have before us a censure motion regarding the government's control of financial affairs and its failure to provide information. We have had 15 minutes of talk about Kakadu and mining. Perhaps the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has the wrong speech in his hands, but I think the matter before the Chair should be addressed.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, speaking to the point of order, if the honourable minister had read the censure motion, he would have noticed that it is framed very broadly. It is a broad-ranging statement on the failure of the government to exercise due responsibility, control and care for the affairs of the Northern Territory. I am discussing the failure of this government to take care of our national parks and its failure to utilise them as a form of promotion to generate economic development in the Northern Territory. I believe that is quite within the terms of this motion.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. In fact, the censure motion is fairly wide-ranging. Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I think that last ruling summarises and encapsulates the situation that is facing us with this motion. This motion is broad, generalised, non-specific and, in fact, nonsensical. It is a desperate attempt to regain some of the ground lost by the opposition through its total failure to address anything of relevance in this Assembly during the last 8 sitting days and, undoubtedly, again today. I will deal with that later because I wish to answer specifically some of the points made by the Leader of the Opposition and to demonstrate his total inability to understand even the most rudimentary aspects of government finance and accounts and the fundamental principles of propriety in commercial and government dealings and his total incompetence in understanding our financial relationships with the Commonwealth government.

This motion is a desperate bid to capture something from these sittings for himself and towards his personal survival within his party because he has failed miserably to project himself as a leader. The man who has been really working as a leader in this Assembly for the last 8 sitting days is about to speak to him. That is the reality of what has been happening in this Assembly. There are fights everywhere within his parliamentary wing and he is trying desperately to grab something to run with. What has he presented us with, Mr Speaker? A demonstration of grandstanding and scaremongering bundled together with half-truths and misinformation in an effort to convince the community that there is some reason to censure this government. In many respects, he has demonstrated out of his own mouth the propriety and appropriateness of the way the government has gone about its business.

I would like to deal with some of the specific issues that the Leader of the Opposition referred to. He said that this Assembly had entered a new era of cloak-and-dagger administration and that this government would not be publicly accountable. This is the government which, during the last 6 months, has made decisions leading to the removal of government credit cards and the creation of a Public Accounts Committee and which has published figures on contingent liabilities for the first time. Does that sound like a government that is trying to hide facts?

What has happened is that, by establishing the vehicle for this Assembly to consider the financial affairs of government properly, we have taken away the basis of grandstanding and obfuscation that the members of the opposition have been running with for the last 18 months. It is hurting them because now they have to deal with matters responsibly and properly through a parliamentary committee. They do not want to do that. They are not interested in responsibility and proper controls. They are interested in grandstanding and scaremongering. That is what that party over there is all about. It has no policies to offer and no vision for the future of the Territory. We see nothing but negativism and the avoidance of issues that are embarrassing to them. They run scaremongering tactics but, once again, they have failed.

Let me deal with just a couple of matters fairly briefly. Firstly, much play has been made today about buffalo lost at Annaburroo. Opposition members have been jibing and carrying on for nearly 3 weeks about the absence of buffalo at Annaburroo. They have joked that the government cannot find those buffalo. All of this has emanated from newspaper reports and rumours. We stated the situation quite honestly. We advised that we had launched a police investigation to check out the rumours that were circulating in the media.

I can now advise members opposite of the results of a police survey of stock numbers at Annaburroo. I authorised this survey to be carried out and the results have come today. That survey showed that there are still approximately 1550 buffalo at Annaburroo. Effectively, we have more buffalo than we paid for. We did not lose any buffalo; we have more than we paid for. That is an example of the nonsense that is continuously brought to this Assembly when the opposition takes a rumour or a story from the media and decides to represent it as fundamental fact. It spreads stories and gossip to confuse and anger the community without even trying to get the facts.

This government will do its job properly and responsibly and it will check its facts before it gives information. To do otherwise in the Assembly would be irresponsible and we would run a serious risk of misleading this Assembly which is a practice we will not engage in. I can advise honourable members that there are no problems with Annaburroo. In fact, the government has made

a windfall profit because of the way it went about purchasing Annaburroo. Those are the facts on that one.

The Leader of the Opposition said that we were trying to hide behind the sub judice rule to avoid answering questions. During the last sittings, the member for Arafura castigated this Assembly repeatedly because of statements that were made here which, in his view, related to a matter that was sub judice! I happen to agree with the view of the honourable member for Arafura that we should not discuss matters in this Assembly that are sub judice. I supported the honourable member's referral of that issue to the Standing Orders Committee as did all members on this side of the Assembly.

We cannot have it both ways. We cannot say that matters that are sub judice should not be debated in this Assembly and, in the next breath, say that the government is hiding behind that rule because it remains silent here on matters that are sub judice. That is a fact. We will act responsibly. We will follow and support the view the opposition has expressed in this Assembly. We will not discuss matters that are sub judice. That is responsible, not irresponsible. To use that as an excuse for a censure motion is reprehensible.

Mr Speaker, I turn to the matter of commercial confidentiality. There is some assumption in the minds of members opposite that the fact that we will not reveal commercially confidential information to them and put it on the public record, available to the entire community, is somehow an irresponsible, cloak-and-dagger tactic to hide information. Mr Speaker, I will tell you that if we did not adopt the practice of respecting commercially confidential information, we would not have the opportunity to reveal any because we would not be given any. We cannot do business with business unless we are prepared to act in a businesslike way. For that reason, it is in the interests of the Northern Territory that we do not reveal such information.

For example, in respect of the Trade Development Zone, in negotiating with 5 different businesses, with 5 different sets of incentives, it is not in our interests for business 1 to know what business 5 receives. If that occurred, every business would seek to obtain the top incentive in every item, and that would cost the government more. That is a fact, Mr Speaker. And even if ...

Mr Smith: And you reckon they won't find out?

Mr HATTON: Even if they found out, or assumed that that was going on, their argument could not survive unless they had evidence of the fact that that is taking place.

The 2 reasons to respect confidentiality are: first, to do business in a businesslike way; and, secondly, to protect the position of the Northern Territory to avoid everybody maximising the amount of money they obtain from the government when we are developing incentives to act as a catalyst to kick-start a zone. That is the reality, Mr Speaker. The honourable members opposite know that I have stated consistently and publicly that, whilst we do not aim to provide government support for industry, we will use incentives and assistance to act as a catalyst to kick-start industries. That is consistent, and that is what we are doing. We have not varied from that policy and we have budgeted for that money. Information is available publicly on how much money has been allocated for the operations of the zone. It was dealt with during the budget statement. We do not resile from our position on that and we believe we have acted responsibly.



Mr Ede: By not doing a feasibility study?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart continues to demonstrate his ignorance in this Assembly. The member says we should conduct a feasibility study on a project, and we have debated this multitudinous times in this Assembly. There was considerable debate on this matter 2 days ago. The fundamental point we put to this Assembly was that a feasibility study was not required because this was an incentive for development. Arguments involving cash flows, the feasibility of the Trade Development Zone Authority and a cost-benefit analysis as we move into commitments will only be revealed when we know the rate of take up of the offers and the rate of incentives that are provided. A cash-flow projection can be developed and there can be forward budgeting and planning for the rate at which we are prepared to invest moneys to create jobs in industry and work. We do that, and we are doing that.

The Leader of the Opposition made the point that he thought that we had started carrying out this particular study only after he raised questions in the Assembly. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, those cash-flow projections were started in May 1986. Unfortunately, he could not have found out about that because the source of his information was not working for the zone at that time.

Mr Smith: And they are still not ready.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, the other point that the Leader of the Opposition raised as a major reason for this motion of censure of the terrible performance of our government was that this government had the audacity to raise a matter of definite public importance. He is leaving the Assembly, Mr Deputy Speaker, he cannot handle the heat.

The Leader of the Opposition says that it is the prerogative of the opposition to raise such matters. The opposition has introduced 7 or 8 MPIs in this Assembly on 8 days during these sittings. Not once did it address anything of real relevance to the Northern Territory with the possible exception of the debate on the Trade Development Zone. But, what do we find? On this last day of these sittings, the opposition raises some nonsensical, wishy-washy motion that we have already demonstrated is way out of court.

Has the opposition dealt with some of the important issues as definite matters of public importance? Has it tried to debate the actions of the federal government in usurping the rights of Territorians and of businessmen operating in the Northern Territory in so far as Kakadu stage 2 is concerned? No, Mr Deputy Speaker. What have the opposition members done instead? They have tried to sidetrack this Assembly with all sorts of odd issues - not the issue of the federal government usurping its rules or the attempts by the federal government to steamroll things through UNESCO by underhanded methods. Mr Deputy Speaker, we have been successful in defending the rights of Territorians. The highest court in the land has upheld the wisdom of what we are doing. But members opposite ridiculed us because it is against their party policy to see reasonable development or reasonable attitudes taken by the federal government in the affairs of the Northern Territory. They continue to carp and criticise the economic performance of the Northern Territory government rather than the amount of money that is available to the Northern Territory.

In its 3 years in this Assembly, that opposition has done more damage to the Northern Territory than the federal government could do in 10 years. The opposition members have done that by their continuous carping and allegations of misuse of government funds. There is no evidence to support their allegations but, through their rumourmongering, they have fed Senator Walsh for 3 years. Senator Walsh uses the same scaremongering innuendo to undermine the financial viability of the Northern Territory.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HATTON: During these sittings, have they dealt with the amendments to the Land Rights Act? Have they dealt at all with the broken promises made by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to the pastoral industry, the Northern Territory government, and to the community of the Northern Territory as to amendments that would be made to the act? Let me say, Mr Deputy Speaker, that as far as we can determine, Minister Holding has broken his word to the land councils as much as to the Northern Territory government and the pastoralists. But we have not heard a word from the opposition about that; it is not relevant to the Northern Territory. Does the opposition think the Land Rights Act is perfect now?

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I accept that this is a pretty general censure motion, but the limit of the motion is that it is directed towards the efforts and responsibilities of the Northern Territory government, not the federal government. We have been subjected to a 10-minute rave about the activities of the federal government. Mr Deputy Speaker, it is out of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but I would suggest that the Chief Minister contain his remarks within the limits of the motion.

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will abide by your ruling, but let me say that the motion is cast so broadly that it is almost impossible to define, except by following the directions of the opposition's arguments.

I could spend hours debating the opposition's comments. The acting Treasurer dealt quite adequately with the fundamental issues associated with the Auditor-General's Report, but I say that it is a problem that there is a \$64 000 discrepancy. It is agreed that we could not fully account for these moneys, despite extensive checking of the new and massive accounting system that has been introduced during the last 12 months. But we must ask ourselves whether this a material matter when it is noted that the error is in the Territory's favour?

Mr Ede: Come on, you can do better than that.

Mr HATTON: It is true that these are relatively small amounts but, even so, we do agree that we should be able to account for them. We do not dispute that. We simply make that point to put that argument in perspective: that it relates to \$64 000 in a cash balance of some \$72m.

Mr Smith: A mere bagatelle!

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, we need to check. Corrective action is being taken, as outlined by the acting Treasurer. It is a shame this was not raised this week in question time so that real answers could be given to the

questions. However, the decision was taken to grandstand in the Assembly. I make the fundamental point that in no way do we believe that this particular discrepancy casts doubt on the substance of the accounts, and that is what the Auditor-General concluded.

There are a couple of other points. This is very important and I hope the Leader of the Opposition listens and learns. We know that there are none so deaf as those who will not listen. He has made a great play about the levels of debt and lending of the Northern Territory government. Anyone with even the most basic knowledge of relations between the federal and Territory governments would know that the Northern Territory is not a member of the Loans Council and every dollar that we borrow is approved first by the federal Treasurer. He determines the amounts we can borrow and the terms under which we can borrow. If we have overborrowed on behalf of the Northern Territory, the Leader of the Opposition is saying that the federal Treasurer has been exercising his powers irresponsibly. We do not believe the Treasurer has done so in this case - he has in plenty of other cases, but not in this particular one.

With respect to contingent liabilities, the honourable member opposite half-quoted the Auditor-General's report. Paragraph 2(b) on page 85 says:

Because of the matters referred to in 1(c) previously, I am unable to form an opinion as to the completeness and accuracy of the information from which statement 6 is prepared.

One must look at paragraph 1(c) which says:

Statement 6 sets out guarantees and contingent liabilities of the government. As in prior years, I am reliant on the Treasury's register of guarantees and contingent liabilities being complete in respect of the information included in statement 6.

Additionally, the accuracy of information provided by prescribed statutory corporations for statement 6 can only be properly assessed at the conclusion of the audit of the 1985-86 financial statements of those corporations. Not all of those audits had been completed at the date of this report.

Mr Speaker, it does not say they are inaccurate but merely that the work is not finished and, therefore, the Auditor-General is unable to determine the accuracy.

Honourable members opposite seem to think that contingent liabilities are the be-all and end-all of government. There are considerably larger contingent liabilities resting outside of the Northern Territory. We have talked ad nauseam about our contingent liabilities and members opposite have made great play of the fact that our figures are inaccurate. We have done some work on what is available in every state in Australia. Members opposite say they have no hope of coming anywhere near our figures.

Let me give a few examples of some of the figures published for contingent liabilities: Victoria - \$2252m; Western Australia - \$4648m; and Queensland - \$7543m. But those figures are very rubbery. By comparison, our contingent liabilities are low and are accounted for far more fully than anywhere else in this country. That is the reality, and it demonstrates the responsibility of the Northern Territory in the Australian context, not the opposite as has been promoted by the opposition for some considerable time.

The Leader of the Opposition said that we have given local government 3% less in real terms when the Northern Territory government's budget is 3% higher in real terms. Again, I can demonstrate the incompetence of the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, the Northern Territory government's budget is 3% down in real terms. Local government has been treated fairly and that was advised in the Treasurer's speech.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, there was some amazing stuff there. Can I start with Annaburroo? I am pleased that the police have been able to find 1550 buffalo at Annaburroo, but the point is whether they have been able to find the tested, TB-free breeding herd. Obviously, the Chief Minister did not answer that very interesting question and, of course, the subject of the whole debate on Annaburroo was not how many buffalo were there, but whether the breeding herd was there or not. It would be very interesting to hear a response on that.

It has been my observation that people like the Chief Minister, who talk about leadership matters all the time, do so out of personal fear for their own position. We all know, and some members on the backbench of the government know better than others do, that there are 3 government ministers presently actively undermining the Chief Minister: the Deputy Chief Minister, the Minister for Community Development and the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications. If I were the Chief Minister, I would not turn my back on them because I would be stabbed. We all know of the dissensions within the CLP at present, with the majority of the sitting members being opposed. In fact, 1 sitting member has established a record by having 7 ...

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The aspirations of members of this Assembly are hardly relevant to the matter that is before the Chair at the moment.

Mr Ede: It is in reply. The point was raised by the Chief Minister.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr SMITH: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I must say that I was provoked into this. As I understand it, 7 candidates have lodged nominations against a sitting member of the CLP ...

Mr Dondas: That shows that we are democratic.

Mr SMITH: It shows it is a democratic party but it also shows that it is a very unhappy party. If you want an example of how unhappy that party is, Mr Speaker, yesterday we witnessed a disgraceful exhibition when the government was not even prepared to allow 1 of its senior backbenchers the right to speak on an issue relating to his own electorate, contrary to all the provisions and precedents that have been established for discussions of matters of public importance.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is the last warning. There are far too many interjections. The Leader of the Opposition will be heard in silence.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, yesterday's performance was a classic demonstration of the uneasiness and unrest within the Country Liberal Party. As I

understand it, Senator Kilgariff and the federal member have issued a press release today saying that it would be a good time for the Chief Minister to go for an election. I agree, Mr Speaker. In its present state of disarray, the CLP would self-destruct in an election campaign. We know for sure that the Chief Minister has a short life anyway as Chief Minister but an election campaign would make it even shorter. I hope he goes because that might lead to better and more accountable government in the Northern Territory.

We heard a lot of bilge from the Minister for Education. Whatever he lacks in substance, he makes up for in noise. He made no sense whatsoever, but he did say 1 interesting thing. He admitted that the casino had not paid taxes until 1 October this year. That was news to me because I thought that there was some sort of taxing arrangement for the casino even though we were not obtaining much money from it.

Mr Harris: Read Hansard.

Mr SMITH: I will read Hansard. There is a very definite statement in there that I noted.

Mr Speaker, we heard a statement from the humanitarian Minister for Education that perhaps welfare money is down because we have less need. I would ask the Minister for Education to talk to the unfortunate people in his electorate and in all electorates who have mentally and physically disabled kids to look after. In a debate on a matter of public importance - that the Chief Minister dismissed as irrelevant and insignificant - we demonstrated clearly that there is a real need in this community for improved facilities for disabled children, particularly for disabled young adults. This Minister for Education, whom one would have thought might have had some sympathy with and concern for children, whether they be normal children or physically-handicapped children, says we have the problem solved. All members know that there are people out there ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition is raising fresh matters. He should confine his comments to matters raised in debate.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I am responding quite specifically to a point raised in this debate by the Minister for Education.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, there are parents who are at the end of their tether and who have trouble coping. Within the last couple of years, there has been an instance of a parent suiciding because of this problem. We all know of parents who take Valium on a regular basis and, indeed, who overdose on Valium on a regular basis because they cannot cope.

Mr Manzie: You describe those people as welfare cases, do you?

Mr SMITH: Of course they are welfare cases! That is where the money to provide them with facilities comes from. It comes out of the vote of the Department of Community Development and it is that vote that is \$600 000 short this year.

Mr Dale: \$16 000.

Mr SMITH: It is that department which has less money than it had before. Yet the Minister for Education can sit there and blithely wipe off the legitimate needs of those people. He should be ashamed of himself because he obviously does not have a clue what is happening within his own electorate and what is happening within the broader Northern Territory electorate.

The Chief Minister said that, to attract industries into the Trade Development Zone, the government needed to give them a kick-start. The level of incentives offered by this government would indicate that they are getting a jet-propelled start. We have said consistently that we have no objection to incentives being offered to firms in the Trade Development Zone as long as those incentives are available to everybody and available on a long-term basis. We are in a position in the Trade Development Zone where we may well be stacking up a new collection of wobblies. I do not particularly want to get into that area at this time. However, the point is that, yesterday, the government indicated quite clearly that Corby in England, which is a success story, is able to put maximum limits on the amounts and type of incentives which are offered to industries. In the Northern Territory, this government will not commit itself to a maximum amount and a maximum range of incentives. That is the basic point we are making about the Trade Development Zone.

We heard from the Minister for Education that this government has a proud record of taking on projects with vision. The only problem is that the vision that it takes them on with is not the vision that we get stuck with. Who can forget the statement of a previous Chief Minister, now the federal member, that a certain major investment opportunity in the Northern Territory would not take a dollar of government money? All those investments that were not going to take a dollar of government money are being propped up to the tune of \$27m in this financial year. That is how good the vision has been to the poor average taxpayer in the northern suburbs who is paying for this government's vision. It would have been all right if we had known about it up-front, but this government has never been able to do its sums so that people know from the beginning the amounts of money that will be spent on particular projects. That is the problem and it is 1 of the kernels of today's debate.

We have indicated clearly in this debate that the government has failed to exercise due responsibility for and control and care of the affairs of the Northern Territory. It has failed to provide to this Assembly the information that would be expected normally from a government reporting to parliament on its financial and administrative responsibilities.

It is all very well for the Chief Minister to tell us that the Auditor-General's qualified report is a result of statutory authorities not having their audits completed. If the government were a competent economic manager, audits of the statutory corporations would have been completed in time for the Auditor-General to conduct his audit. The Chief Minister admitted his government's culpability in this matter of providing accurate reports and information on time to the Auditor-General. It is a prime requirement of government that information be supplied to the Auditor-General within the time span allocated so that he may be able to make judgments on the adequacy of government accounting systems and the government accounts. Yet, for the second year in a row, a situation has existed wherein the government has not been able to ensure that its statutory corporations get their audits done in time to meet the requirements of the Auditor-General.

If the Chief Minister were interested in questions of competent government, I would have expected him to have addressed the question of why

statutory corporations were not completing their audits in time, and what he would do to ensure that they would do so in future. That is a key question. It is one which has not been addressed by the Chief Minister and it is about time that he did that.

The Minister for Education attempted to tell us that we could expect no taxes from the casino before 1 October 1986. What nonsense! We know that some taxing arrangement was in place before 1 October. I am pleased that the government has made an announcement about a new tax regime for the casino but, at this stage, who can have any confidence in estimating the amount of money that will be obtained from that?

Clearly, this government has failed the public accountability test during these sittings. Through a variety of devices that I have outlined, it has failed to provide this Assembly with the information it deserves and demands about what is happening in the Northern Territory with taxpayers' money. That is the kernel of this censure motion. The government has failed to provide the information necessary to allow this Assembly and the public of the Northern Territory to gain a true and accurate picture of the state of the finances of the Northern Territory government. Equally importantly, it has not informed this Assembly about the role that the Northern Territory government is playing in particular projects in the Northern Territory.

Mr Manzie: Which ones have failed?

Mr SMITH: We do not know which ones have failed because we do not have that information. That is the key to this debate. We do not have the information that would be provided in any other parliament in Australia, with the possible exception of Queensland. This government boasts that it is open and accountable to the parliament but, when the amount of information it supplies to this Assembly is measured, it can be seen that it does not measure up to what is provided by other governments to their parliaments. The older and more tired this government becomes, the more it has to hide, and the less it reveals to parliament and the public. Over the past 3 weeks, we have seen a disgraceful number of procedures adopted by this government to avoid opposition attempts to debate issues.

Today, for the first time in my experience in this parliament, the government has decided to propose a matter of public importance. It has to do with education.

Mr Harris: It is a matter of public importance.

Mr SMITH: Of course it is a matter of public importance, and I do not deny that. But by proposing that topic as a matter of public importance, instead of using 1 of the other options available to it - for example, by way of a motion - this government has denied the opposition, which has limited opportunities, the right to propose a matter of public importance of its own.

Mr Manzie: We did not know that you were going to have another one.

Mr Palmer: You withdrew yours.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, we withdrew ours because the government put 1 in. The government's attitude in putting forward that matter of public importance is a further indication to the Assembly and to the people of the Northern Territory that it is running scared. It is not prepared to debate issues in the Assembly.

Mr Manzie: How do we know what you are going to do? We are not mind-readers.

Mr SMITH: This conversation would not have occurred 5 years ago, Mr Speaker. I bet the federal parliament has never seen such a disgraceful incident as we have seen today with the government proposing a matter of public importance. One thing that could be said about Paul Everingham and Ian Tuxworth was that they at least had some feeling and sensitivity towards the procedures of this Assembly, and some deep-felt belief that it was important to ensure that those procedures be followed. The present Chief Minister does not have the same sensitivity and feelings towards the procedures of this Assembly. What we have seen today is a further movement away from normally-accepted procedures of government in Australia.

Mr Hatton: The Westminster system.

Mr SMITH: In the Westminster system, if you want to take it that far.

Mr Hatton: Follow the Senate and the House of Representatives. They do it all the time.

Mr SMITH: The government does not do it. Mr Speaker, this government stands condemned and should be censured for its pathetic performance, particularly over the past 3 weeks, and also for the completely inadequate and inane responses given today on the very important issues that have been raised in this censure motion.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 6

Noes 17

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

Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr Dale  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Hanrahan  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr Manzie  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Poole  
Mr Setter  
Mr Steele  
Mr Tuxworth

Motion negatived.

#### SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday 17 March 1987 at 10 am or such other time and date as may be set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.



DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE  
The Federal Government's Policy on Territory Education Matters

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the Minister for Education:

Dear Mr Speaker,

Pursuant to standing order No 94, I propose for discussion as a definite matter of public importance this morning, the following matter:

the federal government's failure to recognise that Territorians are Australians and, as such, are entitled to the same access to a university education as other Australians and, in particular -

- (a) the federal government's discrimination against Territorians in refusing students at the University College of the Northern Territory access to Austudy and Abstudy assistance schemes; and
- (b) the misleading and inaccurate statements relating to the establishment of the University College of the Northern Territory by the honourable federal Minister for Education in the Senate yesterday.

Yours sincerely,  
Daryl Manzie  
Minister for Education.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr MANZIE (Education): Mr Speaker, the development of the University College of the Northern Territory is a matter of considerable importance both to the Territory and Territorians. It is a development which will affect the future of the Territory and which has particular ramifications as we move towards statehood. It is extremely disappointing and aggravating that the federal government does not recognise our right and our children's right to receive a university education here in the Territory.

We have a situation now where the federal government, which is supposed to protect the rights of all Australians, is discriminating actively against Territorians. That is something to which the Territory government is not unused. Indeed, problems between governments of different political persuasions is part and parcel of politics. What is not accepted practice, and what I hope sincerely will never become accepted practice, is deliberate attempts to score political points by moving against the youth of a particular state or territory. That is what the federal Labor government is now attempting to do to the Territory and it is an utterly shameful and disgusting way to behave.

The federal government has now made it plain that students at the University College next year will not be eligible for Austudy or Abstudy allowances. The reason for this decision is not that the University College is not up to standard, far from it. The federal Labor government is taking this action because it is not prepared to offer the entire Territory population more than 20 so-called university places. It is the Territory government's rejection of this ridiculous and inadequate offer that has prompted the federal government to act in a manner which can only be described as punitive.

Mr Speaker, the federal government's attitude on this issue was demonstrated by statements made by the federal Minister for Education in the Senate yesterday. Like her colleagues, the honourable minister was not concerned with the facts of the matter but merely with political point-scoring. It is a great pity that the people who will suffer as a result of this attitude will be the young people of the Territory. I believe that it is essential that misleading and incorrect statements made by the federal Minister for Education are corrected in this Assembly today. In doing that, I will be able to cover in detail the scope of this matter of public importance.

This week, I have already made a statement about the progress of the University College and I find it deeply disturbing that I am forced to make a further rebuttal of false claims about the University College so soon. The statements made by the federal minister are so misleading and so inaccurate that they almost defy belief. There is no doubt that, in making those statements, Senator Ryan misled the Senate and the Australian people. Either she did so deliberately or in complete ignorance of the truth. Neither of those situations can be justified. The issue comes down to a simple choice between 3 propositions: that Senator Ryan had no idea of what she was talking about and was not across her portfolio; that her senior advisers were lying to her; or that she set out deliberately to mislead the Senate and the public. In any of those cases, the honourable minister has no choice but to resign her portfolio.

Mr Speaker, I am aware that the charges I make against the senator are very serious. However, I believe I can substantiate them simply by examining in detail the responses she gave to questions put in the Senate yesterday. Senator Teague questioned the honourable minister about her refusal to recognise the University College and, by so doing, her denial to students at the University College of access to the Austudy and Abstudy allowances. He asked the honourable minister why it was necessary to provide students with these allowances, as well as 3 return air fares, in order to study at interstate universities when the same courses would be available in the Territory. Needless to say, the honourable minister avoided trying to answer that question at all. Instead, she launched into a diatribe against the Territory and, in so doing, she revealed clearly that she had no idea of what actually was happening at the University College.

The honourable minister began by saying that the federal government would not allow higher education policy to be determined, and I quote, 'unilaterally by state or territory regimes'. It is a great pity that she did not take the time to recall a resolution that was passed at the 52nd meeting of the Australian Education Council last year. That council is made up of Commonwealth, state and territory education ministers and the Northern Territory is a full member of the council with the same rights as other members. I am pleased to report that Senator Ryan attended that meeting at which a very important resolution was passed unanimously.

Bearing in mind the constitutional responsibility of the states for the provision of education, the council resolved that the Commonwealth should acknowledge the wishes of each state with respect to the development of its tertiary education system and that they should be treated as the most important source of advice about the needs, at the state level, during the triennium planning process. It is unfortunate that the Northern Territory government has not been asked for advice about its needs for the provision of university facilities. All we have been given is orders.

The second part of the resolution was that the Commonwealth should negotiate a final decision with the states concerned, where the wishes of the states are mutually incompatible or inconsistent with agreed major national objectives or constraints. We have tried very hard to negotiate with the Commonwealth on this issue even though it is not incompatible with any of the agreed national objectives or constraints. Initially, we tried to negotiate on the full number of university places to be created by the University College. Then we put an offer to the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission under which the Territory would have ended up paying the establishment costs of the University College. In this same offer, we agreed to meet any recurrent costs which were above CTEC's normal funding levels for new tertiary institutions. The Territory government has tried to negotiate on this issue time and time again and the most recent attempt to re-open negotiations was made on Monday of this week. We were given a very flat and definite no.

The third part of the resolution was that the Commonwealth should require the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission to follow a planning process and timetable which would give the necessary emphasis to state views and which would facilitate education provision within the state in accordance with those views. The chairman of CTEC, Hugh Hudson, has made it abundantly clear that he is not interested in the views of the Northern Territory. In fact, he has rejected our views repeatedly and with an arrogance which would be breathtaking if it were not so disgusting. Honourable members will recall my statement on Tuesday in which I revealed that Mr Hudson had subjected a party of Territory representatives to a tirade of abuse directed against both Territorians and the Territory government.

The fourth part of the resolution was that the Commonwealth should communicate, at the final stage in the decision-making process, its proposed decisions to relevant states to enable reaction before such decisions are finalised. The minister has not the slightest interest in the Territory's reactions to her decision, provided that we accept them. When we do not accept them, the backlash is horrendous. It is interesting to note that Senator Ryan seems to have not the slightest intention of following the resolution for which she voted. Obviously, she does not want to treat the Territory government as the most important source of advice about its own needs. She is not interested in negotiating with us. She does not want CTEC to put emphasis on our views and she could not care less about our reactions. Quite frankly, it sickens me that she should have the audacity to accuse us, the elected representatives of Territorians, of taking a unilateral decision. Her own behaviour on this issue has been completely contrary to the conditions that she herself agreed to last year.

Senator Ryan said the Territory government's decision to establish a free-standing university college would involve 'a gross misuse and wastage of public money'. What a load of garbage! Clearly, the minister has no concept of the circumstances of life in the Northern Territory. I will go into the economics of the situation later on, but I wonder if Senator Ryan is aware that it costs the Northern Territory an average of \$14 000 every time we have to replace a family which leaves the Territory. We should be quite clear about this. Interstate tertiary institutions are starting to discriminate against students from outside their own states. We do lose families. We want their kids to have access to a university education. Nevertheless, this year there are about 500 Territory students at interstate tertiary institutions. This has been a continual and growing trend over recent years. For example, in 1984, only 305 Territorians were studying full-time at universities.

The Territory government has a fine record for supporting Territory students who are forced to study interstate. This year, we are paying more than \$280 000 in support to students studying interstate. That is far greater than the total amount the federal government would have allocated to the DIT to fund its proposed 20 university places. It is no wonder that we thought the proposal manifestly inadequate.

The minister went on to describe the DIT as a 'relatively new, relatively small, higher education institution'. That is pretty interesting when you consider that the DIT, in its various forms, has been around for 13 years and is one of the larger higher education facilities outside the state capital cities. CTEC recognises 4 levels of institution, level 1 being the highest. Last year, quite rightly, the Darwin Institute of Technology was reclassified from a level 4 to a level 2 institution in recognition of its growth. It is hard to see how Senator Ryan can describe it as a 'relatively small' institution. But it got worse, because Senator Ryan went on to inform the Senate that the Darwin Institute of Technology 'currently has in the vicinity of 300 students'. I will just repeat that so that members will realise I am not making a mistake.

Mr B. Collins: No, it is wrong. The Hansard record has already been corrected.

Mr MANZIE: Well, that is not what was said, because I have had confirmation that this is what was said in the Senate, and I will repeat it.

Mr Smith: That is not true.

Mr B. Collins: I have the corrected Hansard.

Mr MANZIE: 'Currently has in the vicinity of 300 students'. Those are the words that were spoken, whether the Hansard has been corrected since or not. That assertion was nothing less than amazing, especially when it came from the federal Minister for Education.

Mr B. Collins: It didn't.

Mr Perron: When she found out her mistake, she corrected it.

Mr MANZIE: Let me dispel any concern that honourable members may have after hearing Senator Ryan. Don't you want to listen to this? You don't care about Territorians. You don't care about Territory students. You should be ashamed of yourself. Why don't you be quiet and listen to some facts for a change.

Mr B. Collins: Why don't you go back to pre-school?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There are far too many interjections. The honourable minister will address his remarks through the Chair, and he will be heard in silence.

Mr MANZIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

That assertion about 300 students is nothing less than amazing, especially coming from the federal minister. Let me dispel any concerns that honourable members may have after hearing Senator Ryan's claim. The DIT is still the same size. Presently, it services more than 8500 students. There are 1438 students enrolled in advanced education courses alone, and the total

number of effective full-time students in advanced education and TAFE award courses is over 3200. This information is contained in the DIT's submission for the 1988-90 triennium which, of course, was sent to CTEC some time ago, in line with normal funding procedures.

The honourable minister went on to suggest that the University College should have been established at the DIT to enable 'common use of library facilities, administrative support services and so on'. I have said, time and time again, that the facilities at the Darwin Institute of Technology are strained to the limit already. If there were only 300 students at DIT, there would be plenty of room, but there are more than 8500. The library seats a maximum of 200. I will refer honourable members to the Northern Territory Council of Advanced Education submission for the 1988-90 triennium which has also been sent to CTEC. That submission puts the extension of the DIT library as its top priority for funding in the next triennium.

The honourable minister referred to administrative support facilities. What do they consist of? Those facilities consist of a severely overcrowded administration building, backed up by 254 dilapidated demountables. This talk of sharing facilities is absolutely astonishing, particularly when it is considered that the honourable minister, acting on CTEC's advice, had just allocated \$7.7m to construct a new administration block at the DIT to overcome the present problems.

However, Senator Ryan then proceeded to inform the Senate that a shared campus and facilities was the obvious way to go. It might be obvious to her, but I bet she is a member of a small minority. The honourable minister seems to be at complete odds with the concept that the Territory government is trying to establish. She seems intent on forcing the 2 institutions to share resources already inadequate for 1 institution. That is a path to certain disaster, not to development. We are talking about the establishment of the future state university of the Northern Territory.

But Senator Ryan's list of amazing claims did not end there. In almost the next breath, she accused the Territory government, out of self-aggrandisement, of 'preventing the University College and the Darwin Institute of Technology from developing together in this efficient and sensible fashion'. Let me make it quite clear that Senator Ryan's proposal, based as it is on inaccurate data, is anything but efficient and sensible. It is obvious that she has not bothered to consider the economics of the Territory government's plan to establish the University College at the old Darwin Hospital site. For \$6m, which is about half the cost of building a small, suburban primary school, the Northern Territory will obtain a facility worth \$25m to \$30m. That facility will provide for expansion over the next 10 years. Student accommodation is virtually on site, and so is a block suitable for staff accommodation. That sounds to me like a very efficient and extremely sensible course of action and it is a great shame that Senator Ryan cannot see any need for the entire Territory population to have more than 20 university places jammed into the DIT.

It is the federal government, not the Territory government, that should be accused of lacking sense and efficiency. The honourable minister denounced the Territory government's expenditure on the old hospital site as extravagant and unjustified 'because there will be perhaps only 100 students at the University College'. Senator Ryan is nearly correct about 1 aspect of that claim. If the federal government had its way, indeed there would be only 100 students at the University College. The federal government only wanted 20, and it has done everything possible to hamper the development of

the University College. It is obstructing the issue of visas to overseas students and it will not pay Abstudy or Austudy allowances to University College students. Hugh Hudson even had the hide to threaten punitive action against the Darwin Institute of Technology.

However, in spite of this totally reprehensible behaviour by the federal government, there are now 311 applications from students wishing to enter the University College. Of these, 245 are from Territorians, 22 are from interstate and 44 from overseas. In fact, the University College has received over 700 inquiries.

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

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the honourable member's speech.

Leave denied.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I suppose I could score a few cheap points at the expense of the Minister for Education for making the sort of comments he does about universities and being forced to rely so heavily on either political motivation or departmental advice. But I will not do that because the point I want to make in the discussion of this matter of public importance is a serious one. It is a point that has been made time after time by members of the opposition whenever this university proposal has been raised. I refer honourable members to a debate held in the Assembly 5½ years ago, in June 1981. Later in this discussion, I will refer to that debate again.

The Minister for Education was not a member of the Assembly at that stage, of course, but I suggest that, in order to understand the sensation of *deja vu* that members of the opposition feel when issues like this are raised, he should not only read but internalise that particular debate on a ministerial statement. A debate not, I hasten to add, about the creation of a university college, but about the creation in 1982 - a year later - of a full-blown university. I refer the minister to the debate on the statement on the proposal for a Territory university. It was a ministerial statement, introduced by the then member for Gillen who, at that stage, was the Minister for Education and, as the saying goes, 'plus ça change plus c'est la même chose'. I can do no better than quote the words of the then Minister for Education and I am sure some honourable members will be able to recall the stentorian tones he used to utter these words:

It was with a sense of shock that Territorians learned at the end of April this year that the so-called Razor Gang had put the kybosh on any immediate funding for the setting up of a Northern Territory university. As members will recall, the word came at the very time that the Tertiary Education Commission was meeting in Darwin to look at a case for a university. Only the night before the Prime Minister made his cost-cutting statement in the House of Representatives, I had been hosting a reception for members of the commission. With senior members of the University Planning Authority and the Department of Education, I left that gathering feeling that the many months of ground work had been well worth while.

This is for the establishment of a full-blown university at the beginning of 1982.

The Territory had presented to the commission a well-reasoned case for a university and we felt that we had a fair chance of being on the way or at least of being fairly considered. It took the Prime Minister just 4 lines, in a 44-page statement, to dash our hopes. Perhaps Territorians are used to getting short shrift in their dealings with the Commonwealth. The 4 Solomon-like lines from the Prime Minister's statement were: 'The federal government does not see the need to establish a university in the Northern Territory as proposed by the Northern Territory government and would not be providing funds for this purpose in the forthcoming triennium'.

Mr Speaker, I think that is a fairly instructive quote from the debate in this Assembly 5½ years ago. The Prime Minister involved was, of course, Malcolm Fraser, not our current Prime Minister.

When the Minister for Education introduced this matter of public importance, he was not concerned with reasoned criticism of Commonwealth programs and government decisions. His contribution was characterised by a combination of rage and petulance. He referred this morning, in an earlier debate, to his kindergarten experiences. It is fairly clear from the contribution he made to this discussion that his kindergarten years are not far behind him but well and truly still with him.

I raised the points made by the then Minister for Education because the legitimate criticisms of the federal government that the opposition has made are in stark contrast to the carping criticisms of the Commonwealth government made by minister after minister inside this Assembly and out of it. By golly, if occasionally they get a rough deal from the Commonwealth, I suggest to them that they bear in mind the old proverb about biting the hand that feeds them.

Mr Finch: Where do the taxes come from?

Mr BELL: That is where the taxes come from and a heck of a lot of the budget for the Northern Territory and the programs that we are seeking to run in order to develop the Northern Territory. A large proportion of it comes from the Commonwealth. It is about time that the style of frontbenchers in this government advanced a little beyond screaming and shouting. We have had a dose of it today and it is sickening.

Apart from commenting on the perennial Commonwealth bashing, and the volume of that appears to have been raised since lunch - I am not sure what the honourable minister had for lunch but it certainly didn't agree with him - the second point I want to make concerns the proposal for the University College. The concept of a university college was raised by the member for Arafura and myself in the debate on that statement 5½ years ago. When the Minister for Education sought to beat the opposition about the ears ...

Mr B. Collins: He wasn't even here.

Mr BELL: As the member for Arafura points out, he was not even here. Perhaps he should read that debate before he leaps to his feet in this Assembly and makes ill-considered comments. He should bear in mind that the opposition in this Assembly persuaded the government to take up the idea of this University College. The opposition put forward well-argued and reasoned proposals based on the experience of the development of university education elsewhere in this country. It is an issue that I could discuss at some length. I could refer to the development of the Australian National University.

The name of Professor Manning Clark will be known to a handful of the government members. One of the chief reasons for the establishment of quality historical studies at that university dates back to the transfer of Professor Manning Clark to the infant University College in Canberra that has grown into what is perhaps one of the most impressive tertiary institutions in this country.

Mr Speaker, let me say that I will do whatever is within my power to ensure that the University College proposal that was put forward 5½ years ago by the opposition will come to fruition, that quality university education will grow out of that particular institution and that we will have schools in particular subject areas that will be the envy of South-east Asia. Research into tropical medicine, of which the Menzies School of Health Research is clearly a harbinger, is to be encouraged. These important discussions should not be just a forum for partisan debate. They should be a forum for agreement between government and opposition. Let me say that the opposition has always contributed positively to these debates and it will continue to do so.

The Minister for Education spoke about dilapidated buildings and so on. It is quite clear that the minister has a problem and, if he will be patient, I might just help him to solve it. His problem is that he imagines that universities are buildings. The government is spending money hand over fist on the old Darwin Hospital site and, if time permits, I will make some comments on that.

This is the central point that I want to make in my contribution to the discussion of this matter of public importance. There is 1 area of this particular discussion with which the opposition has no hesitation in agreeing with the government: that Territorians are entitled to the same access to a university education as other Australians. To return to the problem the minister has, the point is that universities are not buildings: universities are people. It is not what happens physically in them that makes them universities; it is what happens between peoples' ears while they are there, that makes universities. I really do not think the minister understands that. If I have 1 point that I hope will strike home in the context of this debate, that is it.

The University College is not a symbol. It is not just something we want to see opened at the beginning of an election year. I could be quite obtuse and suggest that the government's ulterior motive in seeking the development of university education is as a means by which honorary degrees could be received or something like that. However, that would be churlish in the extreme. It is the sort of cheap argument that I eschew.

The University College and the growth of a university from it is not a symbol. The buildings are not a symbol. I do not think that I can put it any better than by repeating that it is what happens between the ears of the people who are there. A university is a group of people and the communication between those people is the essence of a university. Certainly, there are physical appurtenances that may aid that communication and study, but they are secondary.

The proposal that the opposition put forward 5½ years ago - and it seemed like a good one then - was that a University College could grow out of the then Darwin Community College, now the DIT. There is absolutely no reason why those 2 institutions could not work in tandem for the sake of putting resources in their most appropriate place.



That brings me to the vexed question of the site of the University College. For the benefit of the Minister for Education, I point out that, when the idea of a full-blown university was around, we were experiencing something like a university-led economic recovery. There are not too many members of that government left unfortunately, but the member for Casuarina or the erstwhile Minister for Education might be able to tell their present colleagues about the argument that the government was pushing pretty hard at that stage, which was that Palmerston would go ahead because the university was to be built there. At that time, Palmerston was to be a university town. Well, that did not happen, did it?

In case the Minister for Education and the next government speaker imagine that I am trying to level criticism at the government for that particular shortcoming, let me hasten to add that, given the vagaries of Commonwealth government funding, which are the same regardless of which party is in power, the Palmerston project became impracticable. I see the Minister for Education nodding his head sagely and looking at the ceiling, and I do appreciate his agreement on that point. I hope sincerely that he will look back on the history of the University College and appreciate the contribution the opposition has made.

The opposition has continued to criticise the siting of the new university at the old Darwin Hospital site. To say the least, I find it strange that, when the minister is crying poor and saying that the government is strapped for cash, he is prepared to spend \$6m to refurbish the old hospital site. That certainly does not sound like the action of a government that is strapped for cash. The plain fact of the matter is - and I will close on this point - that the expenditure of that \$6m might give the government a bit of a symbol for its election year, but I really do not believe it is an honest, genuine, constructive contribution towards providing the sort of quality university education that this Assembly ought to be talking about. The government is interested in symbols. It is not interested in what young adults and older adults might learn at a university.

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, I was a little disappointed in the member for MacDonnell's comments in relation to the University College because I believe we should be working together on this exercise as an indication to the federal government of our concern at its lack of support for the students of the Northern Territory.

The history of the university goes back some time and it has had a rough road. There is no doubt about that. CTEC made its initial assessment in 1981, and I will quote from page 331 of its report: 'The commission believes that a future university in the Territory should develop independently from the beginning'. That is, independently from the Darwin Institute of Technology. 'It should offer recognised university courses from which teaching and research activities can develop logically and progressively'.

When I became Minister for Education, I acknowledged that we had been aiming high, and that a free-standing university at Palmerston was just not on at that time. I made that very clear. The 1984 CTEC report commented that, for some years, the university would need little in the way of buildings and that 'it might, with advantage, use space which would eventually revert to other uses. The council believes that it should be possible to provide such space in a location closer to the business and cultural centre of Darwin, until such time as the Palmerston site could be effectively developed'.

We had negotiated and put forward submissions to CTEC, and tried to move in line with its thinking all the way along in order to provide university undergraduate courses in Darwin. We had moved in the direction CTEC suggested. I acknowledged that the full free-standing university was not on. We accepted that and have been moving in the direction CTEC wanted us to move. We have followed its directions.

The member for MacDonnell said the opposition put forward the proposal to establish a University College at the Darwin Institute of Technology. I can remember the comments about a 'lean-to' university. The difference between the government's attitude and that of the opposition has been purely concerned with the question of credibility. As I explained to the Leader of the Opposition the other night, my whole concern about establishing the university at the DIT related to lack of credibility. We were not saying that the Darwin Institute of Technology did not have high-quality courses. That was not what it was about at all. The fact is that Hugh Hudson, the Chairman of CTEC, had a vision of all tertiary education being accommodated under the 1 roof. I am not saying that that is impractical. I have argued many times in the Assembly that the concept of TAFE, university and advanced education, housed under 1 roof, may work but it has not been put in place in any other part of Australia. There is no place where a TAFE college offers university courses. Perhaps I could qualify that and state that the universities do not actually operate in TAFE colleges. We did not want to be seen as a guinea pig. I am not knocking Hugh Hudson's visions which may well solve some of the problems with the cost of education in Australia. However, we wanted to make sure that our students had the opportunity to obtain acknowledged university degrees and we felt that the best way to achieve that was by linking with an established university, and that is what we did.

I believe that CTEC and the Commonwealth government are being really bloody-minded over this whole matter. The need to have university undergraduate courses available to students in the Northern Territory has been demonstrated. We have often heard from CTEC and the opposition that it is difficult, based on the current student load at the Darwin Institute of Technology, to justify the establishment of a university. However, that is not the only criterion for that need. It has been demonstrated that there is a need, and we believe that the Commonwealth should respond. It would be a different matter if we had received only a small response in terms of applications for places at the University College.

Students attending our University College will receive degrees from a recognised and respected university. There is no question about that. The facilities at the old Darwin Hospital site will be able to cater for the needs of these students, and that is very important. I know that the opposition has been opposed to the way we have been moving towards the establishment of a University College.

Mr Bell: Nonsense.

Mr HARRIS: It is fact. The member for MacDonnell knows that, as does the member for Arafura. They have been opposed to the general direction we have taken. I think that the arguments put forward by the government, over a period of time, have been reasonable. For example, lack of space at the Darwin Institute of Technology is a very real problem. There would be complications with staffing if we were to establish the University College at the Darwin Institute of Technology. That is not to take anything from the credibility of the Darwin Institute of Technology which is a wonderful institution, and I have never questioned that. The other question was that of

the University College's credibility. We linked up with an established university to ensure that credibility.

The Northern Territory government took all these factors into account in making its decisions. That is why it really annoys me that, because we are pursuing a direction that does not meet with the Chairman of CTEC's wishes, the federal government has seen fit to discriminate against Territorians. Students at the University College of the Northern Territory have been refused access to the Austudy and Abstudy assistance schemes and that is a contemptuous act. Territory students should have access to those schemes. It is interesting to note the comments that have been made by the Chairman of CTEC who, incidentally, was a Labor minister in the Dunstan government of South Australia. He has admitted that the Northern Territory has a constitutional responsibility to make decisions in relation to education in the Territory. However, that only appears to be the case if we move in a direction of which he approves. One might be forgiven for believing that he had allowed his political bias to override all objectivity and rationality in relation to this whole exercise. He wants to crush the University College and he is doing everything in his power to effect that. That is the sad part about all this because what we have proposed would not cost the Commonwealth government any more money than it is paying to provide positions for students in other parts of Australia.

It should be our right to have access to university undergraduate courses in Darwin, and we are going to have them. We have not asked the Commonwealth government to provide full funding. All we have asked for is the same arrangement as that which applies in other parts of Australia.

The Chairman of CTEC commented on the high cost per student of the Darwin University College. I will just refer to the ANU which is the university closest in its functions to the Northern Territory University College. It has been running for 40 years. These figures relate only to costs per student. In 1983, costs per student were \$19 633 which, in 1986 terms, is some \$23 373. I am quoting these figures because the Chairman of CTEC saw fit to criticise the amount that it was costing for our students to be there and, at the same time, commented that, in the history of universities, there had never been anything near that cost.

Mr Speaker, any claim that the figures that I am referring to here are distorted by the proportion of post-graduate students attending the university can be refuted completely. Post-graduate students comprise 21% and that is no greater proportion than at other universities. It is a simple fact of life that the ANU is a very expensive institution. Again, there has been no question about the cost of providing university education; no question whatsoever. It is interesting to note that the Australian National University was funded directly by the Commonwealth and not through CTEC.

Let us look at the new universities that have been established - for example, Murdoch. In 1983, Murdoch had 27 students at a cost of \$6000 per student. In 1986 figures, that equals \$21 135 per student. When we relate to figures like that, they are completely artificial, and the Chairman of CTEC knows that. In 1985, Murdoch had 300 students at a 1986 cost of \$19 000 per student. In 1985, Griffiths University had 400 at a cost of \$20 000 per student, in 1986 terms. As can be seen, the cost per student at the NT University College is not disproportionate in comparison to Australia's other new universities.

It is a fact of life that the cost per student is high in the early years of a new institution. That is true, and the member for Arafura and other members of the opposition must acknowledge that. What we have done is to provide to Territorians the opportunity to attend university undergraduate courses within the Territory. Until now, Territorians wishing to undertake university studies have had either to go interstate or to undertake external studies.

It is interesting to note that Senator Ryan said: 'Why would interstate students travel to Darwin to attend university? It is too far away'. Yet, in her view, it is not too far for Northern Territory students to travel the same distance, but in the opposite direction. To put this into the global perspective, a student from Darwin attending the nearest Australian university - which is at Adelaide - is like a student from London having to attend university in north Africa or the USSR. That indicates the distance the student is required to travel. Despite this, the Northern Territory government is vilified by the Commonwealth for trying to improve this situation for Territorians.

This is a matter of public importance, and I hope the opposition will support the government's efforts to bring the Commonwealth to acknowledge that our students should receive the same benefits that students in other parts of Australia receive. For those for whom attendance at an interstate university is impracticable or impossible, the only option is external studies. I am sure the member for Arafura knows all about external studies. Those who have studied externally have acknowledged that it is very difficult. Does the opposition think it fair and right that Territorians with the capacity and the willingness to undertake university studies interstate should be condemned, ad infinitum, to the arduous path of external studies? This government does not think so.

Mr Speaker, I do not believe the government is being unreasonable. All we want for Territorians is the same opportunity that residents in other states have. Is that unreasonable? I do not believe so. We have to make every possible effort. This is a matter of public importance and it needed to be discussed here today because, if we do not pursue this issue, we will be left out and our students will suffer. We need to have access for students from overseas. Visas need to be issued and I am very pleased to note that, in response to a question in the Senate, the Commonwealth Minister for Education has indicated that there is a method by which this may be effected, and we will be pursuing that.

Mr Speaker, I ask the opposition to acknowledge the history of the University College and that we are trying to obtain the best possible access to university undergraduate courses for our students in the Territory.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I hope I manage to get through my contribution without being shouted and screamed at by the honourable member for Wagaman. I do not know what my chances are. He interjected continually during the excellent contribution by the honourable member for MacDonnell. In fact, he happened to say something with which I fully agree. It was the only thing he said that made any sense at all. He said that the member for MacDonnell was an extreme wit. I agree with that, and I am prepared to say that the honourable member for Wagaman is a shining wit. That is a unique statement from me, Mr Speaker, in that it is the first time I have used a spoonerism in debate in the Legislative Assembly.

There was some comment from the Minister for Education that we did not want to discuss this matter because we objected to its being brought on as an MPI. I would just like to point out briefly to the minister, because I do want to address the substance of this debate, that that is not the case at all. However, I do object to the procedure used, considering the options that are available to the minister. I will quote from Pettifer on the question of MPIs:

Matters of public importance are one of the few avenues available to the opposition, and private members generally, to initiate immediate debate on a matter which is of current concern. Thus, the procedure is used, mainly by the opposition executive, on almost every sitting day.

And it goes on to say this:

Any member may initiate a matter for discussion, but it is not a procedure which would be used by ministers, as there are other avenues available to them to initiate debate on a particular subject.

And to quote from Odgers' Senate Practice, on the same subject, although they are called urgency motions in the Senate:

The urgency motion procedure, which demands precedence of government business for a period up to 3 hours on any day for debate on a matter which any 5 senators regard as a matter of urgency, is part of the greatness of the parliamentary system of government. It is a recognition of the right of the minority not only to be heard but to be heard before the ruling government of the day.

Mr Speaker, I am not saying that governments do not initiate MPIs; they do, but only rarely. However, it is particularly important that they do not do so in this Assembly, Mr Speaker, and I will tell you why. We are a unicameral, not a bicameral parliament. There is no House of review and, unlike the Senate, which has a general business day every week, and the House of Representatives, which alternates general business day with grievance debates on each alternate Thursday - which is the practice in other state parliaments - we have general business day once every 12 sitting days and, because we only sit on 20 days in a year, that is a problem. Up to 6 or 8 months or even longer can pass between opportunities the opposition has to be heard. It does not reflect well on the government that, in a House that sits so infrequently and with so few general business days in comparison with other parliaments, it brings on a debate in this manner. The subject could have been introduced by means of a ministerial statement at any time the government wished.

Mr Speaker, so far as the University College of the Northern Territory is concerned, my major grievance is the manner in which the Northern Territory government has approached this whole issue, because we could have had a university college years ago had the government had enough sense to realise it. The Minister for Education needs to spend as long in here as the former Minister for Education has, because he had the facts right, and made a much more reasoned and valuable contribution to the debate than the person who led it. The present minister should get his history right. He made a statement the other day that Palmerston was never intended to open immediately as a university. I was flabbergasted by that statement but the only reason he made it was because he has only been here for a short time. The member for MacDonnell demonstrated that only too clearly because that was the nub of the argument.

Mr Speaker, 5½ years ago, I tried passionately to persuade the government that, as the Minister for Health said, the plans were too grandiose, but it would not listen. The government chased hares for 3 years on this university and entirely unnecessarily. The reasoned proposition that I put forward, that a university college should be the base from which the university grew, was not good enough for a former Chief Minister. He had to have an instant, free-standing university created from nothing. Who could blame the Tertiary Education Commission for falling about laughing when that submission arrived in June the previous year, stating that a university would be created in Palmerston, from absolutely nothing, and open its doors in February of the following year, offering 15 degree and sub-degree courses with an academic staff in excess of 60, including 5 departmental heads. It was a joke.

I tried to persuade the government at least to consider the option that the TEC said it should have considered: a university college. That former Chief Minister and the former Minister for Education rejected that. They told me that the idea was anachronistic. They were not familiar with that big word but said something that amounted to the same thing. We would have the Alaskan model. University colleges were far too traditional, according to that former Chief Minister, and that was not the way of the Northern Territory.

For 3 years, they chased a free-standing university and did not even explore seriously the option of a university college. Anyone who wants evidence of that should look at the way a university college option was treated in the first NT government submission that went to the TEC. It rated barely a paragraph. What I accuse this government of in respect of getting a university college off the ground - and I am delighted that it is off the ground - is that it has wasted 3 valuable years, as the Minister for Health described in this debate, on a plan which was simply too grandiose. The plan was too ambitious and the government clung to it for far too long.

I commend this current government for having the sense to realise that, although a university college option may not be the most wonderfully chauvinistic, xenophobic way to proceed, because it means we have to tie ourselves into another university, at least that will provide immediate credibility for its degrees. Degrees require hard work and I am delighted the University College will be established here because studying externally is an unbelievably hard slog. I am pleased to note that first year law will be one of the courses offered.

You cannot expect students - and, in this debate, they are the important people - to trust their future job prospects to a university which does not have credible degrees. The University of Buckingham in the United Kingdom is a classic example of the fact that small universities are particularly vulnerable in respect of the quality and credibility of their degrees. That is why the University College is a sensible way to proceed so that students can obtain a degree from an established university which is already credible.

Mr Speaker, as someone who has an interest in this area, I regard with dismay the fact that the government wasted 3 full years hanging on to this myth of a huge complex - no doubt, it would have been called 'The Paul Everingham University' - out on University Avenue at Palmerston. For the record, can I tell the current Minister for Education that Palmerston was indeed designed to be the place where the first university of the Northern Territory would open its doors.

So far as the debate on the current site is concerned, the honourable minister said something today that heightened my concern about Myilly Point.

No one in this Assembly doubts that Myilly Point is prime development real estate. There is not a more desirable site in the City of Darwin. Nobody who has been up to the old Admiralty House and down from Rotary Lookout to the beach or had a look at the vistas available from both sides of that peninsula could doubt that it is prime real estate.

In debate today, the honourable minister said that Myilly Point would be able to provide for expansion for at least 10 years. That is the concern that I have. Universities are voracious beasts in terms of how they consume money. Millions and millions of dollars will be spent on the University College at Myilly Point which eventually, if the land is put to its proper use, will be knocked down. That was precisely the reason why the buildings stood abandoned for 3½ years until the government was forced to admit finally that the honourable minister's hotel of 600 rooms was a phantom and would not proceed.

As a taxpayer, this does concern me. I do not know why the government cannot simply accept that raising concerns about Myilly Point is not, in the hyperbole that it always uses, total opposition to the university. I have no concern about the University College. I am delighted that it is proceeding. It is a far more sensible procedure to offer arts and science degrees at the University College and to build from there rather than to try to offer 15 instant degree and diploma courses which was the original proposal that the government pursued fruitlessly and against the interests of the Northern Territory and its students for 3 years before it finally let it go. I am pleased that the proposal I suggested 5½ years ago will finally be adopted.

In comparing the contributions of the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education, I must say that sometimes the Minister for Education makes it very difficult for a person to support him. However, I will still force myself to say what I intend to say at the end of this debate, despite him and not because of him. His contribution in the lead speech today was probably the worst show I have seen him from him. He has put on some good ones.

I want to correct 2 matters quickly. The question of visas for Malaysian students has been misreported either by the government or by the newspaper, probably by the government. I think the NT News is a far more reliable source than the Northern Territory government. I am happy to say that, in a corrected Hansard that I have, Senator Ryan gave a full statement on the question of visas though I do not have time to deliver it. The Commonwealth government has not rejected them and I understand that the Territory government is now aware of that.

On the question of the provision of allowances, I will conclude by saying that I will be going to Canberra in the first week in December for a meeting of the National Executive of the Labor Party. I intend to ask the Minister for Education to reassess and rethink the Commonwealth government's attitude on the provision of both Austudy and Abstudy grants to students at the University College of the Northern Territory.

#### SPEAKER'S STATEMENT Reference to Privileges Committee

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, this morning during the debate on a censure motion, the member for Arafura raised as a matter of privilege a statement made by way of interjection by the Leader of Government Business. He requested that I refer that statement to the Privileges Committee because, in his view, there was prima facie evidence that the Leader of Government Business misled the Assembly when answering a question on Tuesday

25 November 1986. I have examined the transcript of the statement made by the member for Arafura and the rebuttal by the Leader of Government Business, together with the Hansard record for Tuesday 25 November 1986. I have given the matter careful consideration and I do not propose to refer it to the Privileges Committee.

WORK HEALTH BILL  
(Serial 232)

Continued from 26 November 1986.

In committee:

Postponed clause 65:

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, last night, the opposition treated us to an Oscar-winning performance regarding the people who may possibly be disadvantaged by the proposed benefits payable under clause 65. The opposition took a great deal of liberty in its interpretation of figures contained in the actuaries' report. The government is firmly of the belief that the proposed benefits are equitable and that cases of disadvantage in comparison with the existing scheme would be very few. I have always accepted that there was a possibility that some claimants could be disadvantaged. I explained to the Assembly last night that a balancing act was required and I do not retreat from that position.

Mr Chairman, I repeat that the opposition's proposed amendment is not acceptable because it goes only part of the way towards solving the problem which the opposition sees. It has an unwanted side effect in giving extra benefits to claimants with whom the opposition is not concerned; that is, the vast majority who, in fact, will be better off under the new scheme.

The government has tried to grapple with the problem and has not been able to arrive at a permanent solution, mainly because we do not know exactly how many people would be involved. However, in order to ensure that from the commencement of the new legislation no one is disadvantaged, I propose that a provision be inserted in clause 65 which allows prescription in the regulations of a minimum benefit for a prescribed period.

The government's intention, and I so undertake to the Assembly, is to prescribe as a minimum rate for the 12-month period after the commencement of the act, the amount which disadvantaged claimants would have received under the present Workers' Compensation Act if they had made a claim immediately before the commencement of the Work Health Act. During this period, we will be able to gather comprehensive figures on just who would be disadvantaged and that will provide a basis on which to work out a long-term solution to the problem if, in fact, it exists.

This will mean that the worker described by the opposition who has a wife and 2 children and earns \$300 per week and who, under the work health provisions would have received \$210 per week, will now be entitled, during that 12-month period, to \$297 per week: \$197 for himself, \$50 for his wife and \$25 each for his 2 children. I believe this will allay the fears of the opposition.

I undertake to the Assembly to refer this matter to the Ministerial Advisory Council for consideration and recommendations for a long-term solution. It may well be that this process will take longer than 12 months,



in which event it may be necessary to extend the period for payment of the minimum benefit. The government will consider the matter at the time.

The opposition also mentioned that the Work Health Authority would not be represented outside Darwin. I wish to advise the Assembly that the government has considered that matter and it is our intention to position a representative of the authority in Alice Springs.

In addition, to provide assistance to honourable members on the implementation of this legislation, I take this opportunity to table the draft administrative arrangements in respect of the Work Health Act.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, that is called capitulation with bad grace - extremely bad grace. However, we welcome the amendment proposed by the Chief Minister. On that basis, I seek leave to withdraw my amendment 94.33.

Leave granted.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 94.34.

This amendment has the effect of ensuring that compensation payments to apprentices who are injured while serving their apprenticeship increase in line with the way their income would have increased if they had not been injured. We were concerned that, under the legislation as it stands at present, there was some doubt about the level of benefits payable to apprentices, and how those levels of benefits would increase as the apprentice's salary would have increased as he had gone through his apprenticeship into employment. In our view, the amendment that we have proposed covers that point. For example, it provides that, if an apprentice receives a serious injury in his or her first week of apprenticeship and does not return to work, payments will increase in accord with rises the apprentice would have received if he or she had continued through successive years of the apprenticeship and eventually proceeded into the work force on an adult wage. I understand that the government is prepared to accept this amendment.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the government supports the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 106.1.

This inserts a new subclause (7) which reads:

The regulations may prescribe, in respect of a prescribed period, a minimum rate of compensation under this section and while such a minimum rate is so prescribed workers shall be paid compensation at that rate during that period in lieu of any payment at less than that rate that would otherwise be payable to the worker under this section.

Mr Chairman, that is the amendment which I foreshadowed.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I rise to thank the Chief Minister for moving this amendment. There was a time yesterday when I began to have my doubts about the Chief Minister. I thought the government was serious about cutting off those people on low incomes. I must admit that, during that debate, I said some fairly unkind things about the Chief Minister and members of the government opposite. However, looking at this clause, which shows that the

government obviously has a warm heart, I will withdraw those remarks, and support the amendment.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I too rise to congratulate the government on introducing this amendment. I still have the feeling that the Chief Minister does not understand the seriousness of the situation that was confronting the government last night. We are not talking about a few people who are earning \$300; we are talking about a range of people who, on my figures, had pre-injury earnings of between \$300 and \$420. Of course, on the actuaries' report that we had available to us, that is the majority of people who are injured and will receive payments under the work health scheme. It is not a minor matter, despite what the Chief Minister has said today; it is a major matter, and I am pleased that the Chief Minister has addressed it.

The other thing that I want to say is that it should never have reached the stage that it did last night. I have raised this point consistently for the last 2 or 3 months in discussions I have had with Work Health Authority officials, in the second-reading debate on this bill and perhaps even the second-reading debate on the previous bill. I have to say that the government was neglectful in allowing a situation to develop last night, whereby tempers rose and emotions became involved, when the matter should have been addressed by the government, in all seriousness, some time ago.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I thank honourable members for the comments they have just made. I must agree that tempers certainly did rise last night, and one reason for that was the bewildering array of figures that were floating across the Chamber. It was almost impossible to discern exactly what the Leader of the Opposition was trying to put. It is only as a result of sitting down with the paperwork in front of us last night that we were able to clarify what he was talking about and address the issue so that we have arrived where we are now. I might say that the solution addresses the specific problem that the Leader of the Opposition was referring to, as distinct from his proposed solution, which created payments and added costs that were not intended to be paid.

Mr Chairman, I do not intend to debate what was said or should not have been said, but I think that should be put on the record.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 65, as amended, agreed to.

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

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Totalisator Administration and Betting Amendment Bill (Serial 233) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the opposition is obliged to oppose this motion for urgency. Clearly, the legislation achieves what it sets out to do, and that is to enable the TAB agencies to be located in various licensed outlets. However, although that practice is carried out in various states throughout Australia, because of the very social nature of the legislation, in

that it permits gambling to proceed in licensed outlets, we feel that the matter should be aired far more widely within the community. Fuller community debate can take place only if this legislation is not proceeded with until the next sittings of the Legislative Assembly. For those reasons, Mr Speaker, the opposition is obliged to oppose the urgency motion.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the opposition has been treated with some arrogance by the honourable minister over this particular piece of legislation. Neither in his second-reading speech nor in the motion that is before us at present were we given any reason why the government is seeking urgency for this legislation. I know that the minister will say that the shadow minister has been briefed on this particular issue, but the minister has a responsibility also to provide the Assembly with reasons why the government is seeking urgency. I invite the minister to do that.

The broader point is that this is an important piece of legislation. It is legislation that, I am sure, a large number of individuals and groups in the community will want to comment on. For the government to proceed without allowing time for that comment is to sell the people of the Northern Territory short.

We all know that, on its own, the question of betting is controversial. The question of betting in hotels or in licensed premises is likely to be an even more controversial proposition within the community. The community deserves the opportunity to be able to examine the bill and to make comments to members of the Assembly on the contents of the bill.

At this stage, we are not opposed to the bill. We are opposing urgency to allow time for the government to seek community input and for the opposition to do the same. We should not underestimate the importance of the bill. It is only a short bill, but it is a significant piece of social legislation and, as a principle, the opposition believes that pieces of social legislation should lie on the Table so that people in the community have a chance to comment on them. That is why the opposition is opposing urgency on this bill vigorously.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, you would remember the long and bitter debates that accompanied the proposal for a casino in Alice Springs, the debates on the inclusion of 1-armed bandits in the casinos and the arguments about whether they would be allowed in clubs or not. I think those debates were helpful to the community in that people became involved. They became aware of the issues and were able to discuss them. Letters went backwards and forwards to the newspapers and, even though some people may not have been convinced, in the final analysis they felt they had been given their rights as citizens to be involved in those discussions.

We have not been unreasonable during these sittings - far from it. We have agreed to urgency motions in respect of some 7 pieces of legislation. Some of those motions were on fairly shaky ground in that the basic reason given was that Cabinet had decided that the legislation would commence on 1 January. I am becoming concerned about this. The opposition has bent over backwards to assist this government to provide for what it sees to be good government of the Northern Territory. The opposition has cooperated on that, but now the government takes that for granted and has begun to seek urgency where there is absolutely no reason for it.

The opposition has said repeatedly that it would be preferable not necessarily for this Assembly to sit on more days a year - probably 27 or

30 days is adequate - but to sit more regularly. If it were so fired up about getting this legislation through, the government could have called a meeting in September and another in October. For example, the Assembly could sit for 1 week in each month, perhaps with a break over the December and January period. I submit that that would provide far better government. It would allow pieces of legislation to be presented 1 month and debated the next month. It would not be necessary for legislation to be thrust through under urgency because the next meeting was 4 or 5 months away. Mr Speaker, that is a completely ridiculous situation. The government is taking advantage of the fact that the opposition has tried to help it with some pieces of legislation.

The electorate deserves the right to discuss the issues involved in this quite important legislation. Many people would say that, to a person who should perhaps join Gamblers Anonymous, this legislation will not make any difference. I do not want to discuss the actual content of the legislation because that would be quite improper of me. However, Mr Speaker, it contains issues of very real importance and considerable interest to many groups around the Northern Territory. They have the right and, some would say, the obligation, to be involved in issues which are as important as this, which go to the very heart of the social fabric of our community and change our way of life. These are issues which should not be rammed through under urgency motions without even the grace of an explanation of what is so urgent about them apart, possibly, from being the whim of Cabinet or the result of an undertaking to some particular group in the Northern Territory which would have been given without the ratification of this Assembly. Such an undertaking is not something that we in this Assembly have to abide by. I hope that the government will take cognisance of the fact that we have been very lenient in giving urgency to the government during these sittings and allow discussion on this bill before it is passed through the Assembly.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to point out to the acting Treasurer that he grew up a little bit closer than I did to where John Wren made his money. I am fairly confident that my allusion will not be lost on him because John Wren ...

Mr FIRMIN: A point of order, Mr Speaker!. The member is not addressing the motion before the Chair.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, it really is a sore trial when one has so many obtuse government members to deal with. I crave the member for Ludmilla's indulgence. I will lead him to the point where I will clarify the relevance of this to our opposition to urgency. Probably, he will have to concentrate for a full 60 seconds. I urge him to try.

To return to what I was saying, some honourable members will recall the figure of John Wren. Some suggest that it was he who was portrayed in the Frank Hardy novel 'Power Without Glory'. If the member for Ludmilla has not read that book, he may have seen the television series. My point is that the regulation of racing and gaming and of SP betting should be seen against the background of great historical tensions between legal and illicit gambling in Australia. Racing and gaming legislation has a long and honourable history in the country and I believe that the radical proposals implicit in this bill deserve, as previous opposition speakers have suggested, to be canvassed far more extensively in the community.

We are not dealing here only with racing and gaming legislation, but with liquor legislation as well. Legislation to regulate the sale of liquor to a far greater extent than the sale of soft drinks is a reaction to significant community disorder. That is the historical genesis of liquor legislation. That is why we have it. I appreciate that many members have no historical perspective on the legislation that passes through this Assembly and they may find it a little difficult to appreciate. I hope that the 60 seconds spent by the member for Ludmilla has been informative and that he has perceived the point I am trying to make which is that it is a big step to put TAB agencies in pubs.

Legislation such as the Racing and Gaming Act has been in place for many decades. Legislation governing liquor dates from the industrial revolution, if not before. Governments have long felt the need to legislate to provide a framework for the sale and distribution of grog. In respect of both those matters, there have been comprehensive and tight legislative frameworks imposed throughout the western world. Given that, it is hardly appropriate to say that we should put TAB in pubs as quickly as possible and not worry about the implications.

Mr Dondas: I wish it were as easy as that.

Mr BELL: I will pick up that interjection from the member for Casuarina. He says that he wishes it were as easy as that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member should link his remarks to the motion on a suspension of standing orders.

Mr BELL: I believe I am doing so, Mr Speaker, because I believe that the nature of the bill is the key issue in opposing this motion of urgency. The member for Casuarina has suggested that this bill does not do what it purports to do, in which case the whole issue of seeking or not seeking urgency is rather clouded. I will assume that he is wrong and that the acting Treasurer was right when he told us what the import of the legislation was to be.

To reiterate what other members of the opposition have said, I am not opposing the bill per se. However, I do believe it deserves far more community input than the government indicates that it is prepared to have. For that reason I oppose urgency. I would also corroborate the comments of my colleagues ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is coming close to transgressing standing order 70 which refers to 'a member who persists in irrelevant or tedious repetition'.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, far be it from me to be either irrelevant or tedious in my remarks. I was setting a framework for my opposition to the seeking of urgency. I believe that it is not good enough to introduce this bill on a whim and to suggest that it does not have far-reaching implications.

My final point relates to the difficulty of coming to grips with legislation introduced in this way. There are 6 members of the opposition and that places considerable demands in terms of being familiar with legislation. During the 5½ years that I have been in this Assembly, we have received requests for urgency once or twice a year. In these sittings, the government has sought urgency for about 5 pieces of legislation. That may not be the exact figure, but it is close. I see the Chief Minister waving his hand. He has lost count too. It is not a practice to be encouraged, and it does not

enhance the reputation of this legislature, low as it is in the eyes of many people in the community, when such major legislation is pushed through in this fashion.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I want to make 1 point which I think has escaped the attention of honourable members opposite. We have heard many comments, particularly from the member for MacDonnell, about the fundamental significance of the policy issues which are being raised. I would refer honourable members to the final statement made by the Treasurer in his second-reading speech. He said: 'This amendment will remove any doubt and allow the TAB Board to get on with its role of providing a progressive and profitable service with increasing returns to the racing industry and government'.

This piece of legislation is not geared to create a policy change. It is to clarify what we believe are the existing rights and opportunities available to the TAB. It is merely to clarify an interpretation of the legislation so that it can be put beyond doubt. Arguments as to whether or not TAB should go into pubs are quite separate. We argue that that opportunity already exists under current legislation. This legislation merely clarifies that and, for that purpose ...

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Speaker. The Chief Minister is addressing the bill.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable Chief Minister will limit his remarks to the motion.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, those remarks were directed precisely to the motion before you because the motion relates to urgency.

The point that I am making is quite clear. This is not a matter of policy but rather a matter of clarification of legislation. It is not a fundamental policy decision of government. It simply clarifies existing legislation and it does not need to lie on the Table of the Assembly for 30 days to enable public debate to take place, as suggested by members opposite. It is appropriate that the existing legislation be clarified so that there is no confusion in the community.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I listened with great care to members of the opposition opposing the urgency motion, and the history lesson given by the member for MacDonnell. His references to John Wren of Collingwood, the man known as the king of pigeon racers and SP betting, were well appreciated and enjoyed by honourable members.

We are not proposing urgency because we are changing policy but because this amendment will clarify the present legislation in relation to our ability to place TAB facilities in licensed premises. This is necessary because the current legislation is not specific and we have been advised that there may be some difficulties with it. I have had discussions with the member for Nhulunbuy, the opposition's spokesman on racing and gaming, and he has been briefed by the head of the TAB. Obviously, that cleared some doubts that the honourable member may have had about certain aspects of the legislation.

The main purpose of this legislation is to enable the government to provide TAB facilities at Palmerston where none exist at the moment. The town has a population of some 8000 or so and, unlike other Territorians, at present those people do not have the advantage of access to TAB facilities. It is

proposed to provide those facilities at the Palmerston Tavern. There has been a persistent demand for such facilities. This amendment will allow those facilities to be placed in Palmerston almost immediately. If we do not pass this amendment now, Palmerston will not have the facilities until after next March.

I am sure members opposite would not like that to happen because I know members are fully in favour of the principle of PubTAB. I have here a copy of the Australian Labor Party's racing and gaming policy. I would like to quote from page 21 for the benefit of 5 of the members opposite who do not know the policies of their own party:

A Labor government would consider allowing certain hotels to operate TAB sub-agencies. Stringent requirements preventing apparently intoxicated persons from betting would be enforced upon penalty of loss of sub-agency licence. The advantage of allowing hotels to obtain sub-agencies is that, on interstate experience, this reduces illegal offcourse betting.

Mr Speaker, urgency is required so that the people of Palmerston may have a facility in line with the policy of the Northern Territory government and the Labor opposition. The only thing we are arguing about here is whether the people of Palmerston should have the same facilities as other Territorians.

Motion agreed to.

TOTALISATOR ADMINISTRATION AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 233)

Continued from 19 November 1986.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, unfortunately, the opposition is obliged to oppose this legislation. I appreciate that many Labor governments throughout Australia have introduced PubTAB. However, because the government has decided to give urgency to this bill, we have no choice but to oppose it. We do not believe that there has been broad enough community discussion on the matter and members of the community have not had an opportunity to express their concerns about potential problems to their elected representatives. I have spoken to a number of interest groups and individuals. The racing industry supports the proposition but there is some concern among agency operators that their incomes could be jeopardised. I ask the minister to comment on that matter.

I take the opportunity to thank the minister for the briefing his officers gave me on the introduction of PubTAB. I would ask him to enunciate for the record the rationale for the introduction of PubTAB into hotels. I have no choice but to oppose this legislation, not because I disagree with it necessarily but because I do not believe the matter has been given sufficient public airing. I would like to foreshadow that, in the committee stage, I will move an amendment to the bill.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, I cannot believe all this. The bill merely puts beyond doubt the ability of the Totalisator Agency Board to licence TAB outlets in hotels or clubs. It is not a great government initiative. The opposition is fully aware that urgency was sought in order to allow the operation of a PubTAB agency in Palmerston. A full-scale TAB agency does not become economic until it has a market in excess of 8000 people. The Palmerston market is nowhere near that size and all it warrants is a small

operation in the pub. Many other smaller Territory centres such as Elliott, Dunmarra and Timber Creek could benefit from the PubTAB system.

Mr Bell: Why the pub? Why not the milk bar?

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, there is no reason why not. There is no reason why it couldn't be the local supermarket which is also a licensed premises. The member for Nhulunbuy said that the community is not aware of the concerns it may have. What concerns, Mr Speaker? We debated the whole issue of TAB some 18 months ago. The opposition supported the government's initiatives in relation to TAB. The intention of expanding the TAB network from the initial agency basis was never hidden from the opposition. This legislation merely puts beyond doubt the power to operate on licensed premises.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, having heard the contributions of members of the government, I want to make a couple of comments. They have been at great pains to try to explain that this is not a policy change. I draw honourable members' attention to clause 5 which says inter alia: 'The board may establish an agency on licensed premises and may, for the purposes of this act, nominate the whole or a particular part of the licensed premises as premises of the agency'. That is a major shift. I take the point that the bill puts the power of the government to act in this way beyond doubt, but the fact is that it has not happened before. There have not been TAB agencies in premises licensed under the Liquor Act elsewhere in the Territory before.

Honourable members opposite told us that the citizenry of Palmerston are committed, almost to a man, to the concept of a totalisator agency existing in the local pub. I would be surprised if that is so. Let me place on record that, whilst not coming down on either side of the argument, I reiterate that the people out there deserve a chance to comment on it because it is a contentious issue. As far as I am concerned, ramming this legislation through under urgency is hijacking the electorate.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I thought I would reflect for a moment on the holier-than-thou attitude adopted by the Labor Party on this matter. Here we have an organisation that would, upon assuming power - which is a fanciful notion, I admit - allow poker machines to be installed in clubs right across the Northern Territory. Now, however, it says to us 'Goodness, horror! The community might be concerned if it is made clearly legal to bet in pubs rather than doubtfully legal as it is now'. The opposition is saying that we are making a major policy change when all that we are doing is removing doubts that exist under present legislation.

Our concern arises from the section of the TAB act which says that alcohol shall not be taken on to TAB premises. PubTAB involves a licensee setting aside a specific area for betting. It could be said that this would be permissible under present legislation if the PubTAB area had a sign on the door telling people to leave their drinks outside. In other words, alcohol would not be permitted inside the TAB agency. Uncertainty arises because the Liquor Act calls the whole building a licensed premise and there is doubt about sectioning off parts of it. There could be a legal challenge to the placing of TAB agencies on licensed premises.

This legislation removes that doubt so that we can provide further services to the people of the Northern Territory. These are services which at least the member for Nhulunbuy supports. I am sure that he understands that access is the secret of success for a TAB. We have a sparsely-settled population. Even some of our towns, places like Humpty Doo, Noonamah and



perhaps Batchelor and Adelaide River, are not big enough to warrant the establishment of a stand-alone TAB agency. It is logical, therefore, to allow the TAB to share other premises. That will allow people access to the facility and discourage SP operations. It would seem fairly sensible to make the local watering hole the place where TAB facilities are located. I do not see anything wrong with that. I do not see that it is a great change to alter legislation to enable it to happen. It is particularly strange that the opposition would resist the move because, if it won office, it would allow poker machines in clubs right across the Northern Territory. Virtually all clubs are licensed premises and therefore it would be possible to gamble furiously in them but no one would be able to bet on a racehorse because that sort of thing requires very careful deliberation by the community. I support the bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the member for Fannie Bay has taken some fairly serious liberties with our policy on poker machines in clubs. Our policy is that first a referendum would be taken among all members of a club, and an absolute majority would be required before machines were introduced. I did not research the difference in returns from poker machines and TAB, because I did not realise it would be debated here. I would guess that poker machines would produce a higher return to a club than TAB would. Poker machines would provide a direct benefit in terms of facilities for club members whereas the profits from TAB would provide facilities for operations which are remote from the club. The Darwin Turf Club, the Alice Springs Turf Club and various other organisations would profit.

Mr Perron: And Consolidated Revenue.

Mr EDE: Yes, and if you have the right connections, a small amount of that might go back to your club. Our poker machine policy would provide much more direct and substantial benefits to the clubs.

I am a bit worried about the explanation offered for urgency: that it is simply to give Palmerston a PubTAB. We heard the member for Leanyer who does not speak very often despite Frank Alcorn's high opinion of his ability. He stated that he is happy to have the TAB in pubs, roadhouses and supermarkets, as well as licensed clubs. That would be a very substantial broadening of the scope of TAB operations.

The member for Fannie Bay at least pointed out the real nub of the issue: that, currently, no alcohol is allowed into TAB premises and that this amendment will allow alcohol on a premises where the TAB is operating. It is true that some states have made this move. I would have appreciated more time in which to consider this matter because I come from an electorate where there are already considerable social problems among people on low incomes. I am not concerned about the inveterate gambler who will always find something to bet on even if it is only 2 flies crawling up a wall. I am concerned about the hullabaloo which will follow when people have a few ales and decide to risk a few bucks on the ponies. They may get carried away and bring even worse financial problems on their families. It is ...

Mr Perron: You have the same problem with poker machines.

Mr EDE: Poker machines would only be installed if there was a referendum in which the absolute majority of club members agreed to them. That will not happen with roadhouses along the track. The White Cliff Roadhouse in the member for Barkly's electorate or the Ti Tree Roadhouse in mine will not run referenda. I would have preferred some extra time so that I could have

will be some means for doing that, and I hope that publicans will take the wishes of the community into account rather than looking solely to their own financial rewards.

As the member for Nhulunbuy said, we will be opposing this legislation. This is basically because the government has invoked urgency and has refused to go to the people to discuss the change. The minister said that TAB is to be introduced in 1 or 2 pubs only, but it has the potential to extend much further than that. From the gleam in his eye, I am quite certain that the acting Treasurer has taken on this role with a considerable amount of gusto and is already seeing the dollars flowing in.

I do not support the bill. I might have supported it if it had not been put through under urgency. I would have discussed it with the people. For the sake of the TAB, I hope that this measure will not generate a backlash against the TAB and its operations.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, in his closing remarks, I would like the sponsor of the bill to make a very clear statement about where the government intends to place PubTAB facilities in the next 12 months to 2 years. One of our major concerns relates to the viability of existing TAB outlets. We all know that they have had a pretty rocky start and I would be quite concerned if they were faced with competition from pubs. I was rather alarmed by the member for Leanyer who seemed to be saying that there should be a TAB agency, whether in a pub, a roadhouse or whatever, every 100 yards or so. It would be like having 12 senators. There would be a senator on every corner and a PubTAB next to him! One important reservation that we have is that the viability of existing TAB outlets should not be affected by PubTAB. I would appreciate a very clear statement from the minister that existing TAB outlets will not be affected.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I will cover some of the concerns that have been raised in relation to what premises would be involved with PubTAB in the future. Initially, the aim would be to establish it in areas not currently serviced by TAB; for example, Palmerston, Humpty Doo, Noonamah and perhaps Yulara.

The other area of concern is in relation to agencies. I appreciate that concern. Obviously, if I had an agency, I would be a bit touchy about the possibility of the hotel up the road taking away business. I can assure honourable members and agency owners that the government's position is the same and that we have the same concerns. If an agency were to open in an hotel adjacent to an established agency, the government would ensure that the established agent operated the new agency. Under no circumstances do we intend to set up anything that will deprive current operators of income. The aim is to establish the TAB in areas where no agency is operating at present. The town of Palmerston will be moved into very quickly because, at present, there is no facility whatsoever for the people of Palmerston to place bets.

Many minor concerns were expressed about the evils of it all. I think we have covered that. It is pretty clear that the ALP's policy is very straightforward. Its platform indicates that it would operate PubTAB. We have been convinced by effective arguments put by members of the opposition at different times, that this is a good idea. Now that we have embraced it wholeheartedly, I am a bit amazed to find some resistance. However, I applaud the member for Nhulunbuy. Probably it was his hard work that brought about the amendment that we are proposing at the moment. I hope he can convince the Leader of the Opposition to read his policy in relation to the TAB in detail and that we will see a little more enthusiasm in relation to these matters.

Leader of the Opposition to read his policy in relation to the TAB in detail and that we will see a little more enthusiasm in relation to these matters.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Bill taken as a whole:

New clause 4A:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 104.1.

The amendment provides for a new clause 4A which reads:

Section 6(2) of the principal act is amended by inserting, at its end, '1 of whom shall be appointed to represent the interest of the race clubs after the minister has given the principal clubs, within the meaning of the Racing and Betting Act, the opportunity to make recommendations to the minister and the minister has considered these recommendations if any'.

Simply put, the amendment would ensure that a representative of a principal club would be a member of the board. There are 2 principal clubs in the Northern Territory: the Darwin Turf Club and the Alice Springs Turf Club. This amendment would ensure that a representative of either of those 2 clubs or indeed a person representing both of those clubs would be on the board.

The importance of TAB to the racing industry generally is well recognised throughout Australia. That recognition has been reflected in all the states through the clubs having representation on the boards. This is not a remarkable proposition but something I hope that the minister will accept, and I look forward to the passage of this amendment.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I am casting my mind back to the time when I was involved with the establishment of TAB. From recollection, I asked similar questions when it was proposed that the board would not include representatives of the racing industry. That seemed rather unusual to me, but not being a person greatly experienced in the racing industry, I sought advice on the subject. From recollection, I was advised that the practice is not common. I might even have been told that it was not the case at all that the boards had representatives of the racing industry on them.

The reason is that the TAB system, a system of government control of gambling, is really a purely statistical business which has only an incidental connection with racehorses. Whilst the betting is placed on racehorses, the TAB system uses racehorses as a convenient means of allowing people to bet in a way that is attractive to people who like to bet on horse races. The sorts of persons needed on the boards are businessmen who are capable of making the necessary judgments about public relations, marketing, population factors, agencies, sub-agencies, contractual arrangements and so on. Of course, a TAB could run into financial trouble if it were not organised properly. Indeed, at some stage in the past, the Canberra TAB overcapitalised on its headquarters.

Mr Leo: Not a single industry representative on that board.

Mr PERRON: The Canberra one?

Mr Leo: That is probably why it got into trouble.

Mr PERRON: But TABs handle enormous sums of money and, no doubt, invest those funds in various ways prior to their distribution to industry, governments or whatever. In fact, in a financial sense, they are giant businesses. Certainly, those in places like Victoria and New South Wales operate turnovers in the billions of dollars. Therefore, it is important to have on the boards of these organisations people who are financial whiz-kids, public relations people and the like rather than people who are experts in the racing industry and at organising horse races and racing clubs. The 2 are somewhat unrelated.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I cannot add very much to that. The member for Fannie Bay has hit the nail on the head. The TAB is not a racing industry operation. It is a Totalisator Agency Board operation and, as such, it does not need a racing industry representative on it. It is not the body that distributes funds to racing clubs and it has no involvement with racing whatsoever except that the bets that generate the funding are placed on horses.

Mr Leo: I don't think so.

Mr MANZIE: We are right there. We are talking about principal clubs but a number of other activities besides horseracing are utilised by the TAB. The government does not support the amendment.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, the only reason why the racing industry in Australia is the envy of the world is because it is a billion dollar industry. We must think of it in industry terms. Its turnover runs into billions of dollars. It is a monstrous industry in this country. Everybody thinks of horseracing as horses running around a track. They do not think of trainers and jockeys. It is an absolutely huge industry.

The reason why our industry is considered to be the best in the world, by any international standard, is because of the TAB and its operations in this country. To say that the TAB is unrelated to the racing industry is absolute nonsense. One depends upon the other; indeed, one is the other. The racing industry is the TAB and the TAB is the racing industry. It is the single factor which sets our racing industry apart from that of the rest of the world as being the best in the world.

The minister has been given a brief by the TAB, and he has been sold exactly the same pup as the former Treasurer was.

Mr Manzie: Just pipe down, Danny.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I am trying to get it through to the minister that he should check the representation on other Totalisator Agency Boards. The request is not radical or illogical. TABs throughout Australia have recognised that it is the only reasonable way to constitute the board. I ask the Attorney-General to do some research.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, the member for Nhulunbuy has just told us several times what a great industry horseracing is in Australia and how the TAB works with it. But, he has not told us why he wants that representation on the board. What difference will it make to the horseracing industry that is already doing so well throughout Australia? He has rambled on for about 10 minutes and has said absolutely nothing to make his point.

Mr Chairman, if he wants to compare our TAB with other TABs, we must ensure that he is comparing an apple with an apple. He must be sure that those boards have been established in exactly the same way as the TAB here. He must determine whether or not representation from the racing clubs would have any influence whatsoever on how funds were distributed to those racing clubs. He has not made that point either, or is he simply interested in the entrepreneurial side of the TAB where perhaps the person representing a racing club would instigate betting on football or yacht races or something? It is quite obvious that the member in this Assembly who knows the least about this industry is the member for Nhulunbuy.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I can see that I will be defeated by ignorance and nothing else. I will be defeated by blind, stupid ignorance.

Mr PALMER: Mr Chairman, the congenital idiot on the other side ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr PALMER: I unreservedly withdraw that remark, Mr Chairman.

The member for Nhulunbuy has achieved a degree of idiocy unparalleled in the history of this Assembly. There is no reason why the minister cannot appoint members of the principal race clubs to the board. It is quite within his power. I think the minister should have the right to appoint to the board whomever he sees fit. To require him by legislation to appoint nominees from various principal race clubs would be an undue imposition on the proper operation of the board of the TAB.

Amendment negatived.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

#### TABLED PAPERS Documents Relating to Sacred Sites

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I table 3 papers and wish to make a brief statement in relation to them. In August this year, the government established a Sacred Sites Review Committee to consider the future operation of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act. Much controversy surrounded the circumstances that led to and the events covered by what is now generally referred to as the Davis Report which was produced by Mr Stephen Davis in July of this year. Members will be aware that the Davis Report posed a series of questions regarding the activities of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority in relation to events concerning Coronation Hill. Those questions were duly put to the authority and answers were received. Subsequently, Mr Davis was invited to comment on the responses made by the authority. As yet, the answers provided by the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority and Mr Davis' comments on them have not been made public.

There has been considerable public debate on this matter. Therefore, it is in the public interest that this information should be made available. Of course, the issues raised by these documents will be fully considered by the review committee. In consequence, I table a full set of the documents relevant to this matter: the questions, in appendix 5 to the report, posed by Mr Davis in relation to the Coronation Hill site; the answers provided by the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority to Mr Davis' questions; and Mr Davis' comments on the answers provided by the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority.

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

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER  
Publications Committee Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I table a report from the Publications Committee relating to the pricing and distribution of parliamentary publications and move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION  
Publications Committee Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would allow the Electricity Commission Amendment Bill (Serial 251) to proceed through all stages during these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

ELECTRICITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 251)

Continued from 25 November 1986.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I was tempted to oppose urgency on this because of the shabby treatment we received earlier but, of course, I will not refer to previous debate. Let us simply take this bill on its merits and consider the fact that Cabinet has decided to implement these amendments. A number of proposals have been discussed about how the water supply is to be managed. We have heard of the Water Authority, water boards, water boards under NTEC and other things. I do not want to canvass all of those proposals now because that is not the substance of what is being discussed here.

Mr Speaker, this bill simply ties in with a previous bill, if I may seek your indulgence to mention the previous debate. It relates to the Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment Bill (Serial 251). At the time of passing that bill, we gave approval for the other half of this transaction. It enabled water to come under NTEC, and this allows NTEC to take responsibility for water. The opposition believes that to be an eminently sensible arrangement, in particular whilst the government decides its ultimate policy in relation to water. It should lead to some savings in administrative charges. Of course, as is recognised outside this Assembly but not always fully appreciated inside, the opposition, which is always working towards better administrative arrangements for the Northern Territory, will support the legislation.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DONDAS (Ports and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Darwin Port Authority Amendment Bill (Serial 249) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the opposition will not oppose granting urgency on this particular legislation because we understand the necessity for its passage during these sittings. However, I think it only fair that the Assembly be given some explanation as to why this legislation could not have been introduced earlier, and why it must be passed at this stage. Obviously, I know why that is but, for the sake of the public record and for other members of this Assembly, I think the minister is under some obligation to explain why it is necessary to proceed in this manner.

Mr DONDAS (Ports and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I thought I had covered that explanation during the course of my second-reading speech. I questioned the department about the necessity to pass the legislation through all stages at these sittings. Because the new small ships facility is almost complete and will be ready for use by the middle of December, the Port Authority must have jurisdiction over that area. My next question to the department was why this legislation was not prepared and presented during the August sittings. The response from the department was that, at that time, road alignments and easements still had to be arranged. Discussions had to take place with Australian National Railways with regard to the location of the boundary of the new safe harbour and that information was not finalised until very late September or early October.

I have had some discussions with the member for Nhulunbuy and I have a plan which shows a line drawn around the safe harbour indicating the area which will be included in the Port Authority's jurisdiction which will ...

Mr Ede: Did you do a feasibility study?

Mr DONDAS: The honourable member jokingly interjects about a feasibility study.

Mr Ede: I am not joking.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, we do not have to conduct a feasibility study to put a line on a map to alter the boundaries of the port.

I apologise to the Assembly for the haste involved in the passage of this legislation. However, it is important and I would not like to hamper the functioning of that facility once it becomes operational. More importantly, I think that the people who will use the facility need the protection of the Port Authority. At this stage, I understand that some 46 fishing vessels have booked space within that particular area.

Motion agreed to.

DARWIN PORT AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 249)

Continued from 25 November 1986.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, as the minister outlined clearly in his second-reading speech, the change of boundary will allow the new small ships facility to be administered properly by the Port Authority. Unfortunately, at the moment, it is outside the jurisdiction of the Port Authority. It is necessary that a body - and certainly the Port Authority is the most appropriate - have control over the administration of that facility. The opposition supports the bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, we have spoken at length in these sittings about feasibility studies for the Trade Development Zone, and this is another project on which the government did not even have the grace to give us a detailed report. I support this bill. There is no way that we will place unnatural hindrances in the minister's path so that later on he may turn around and say that the opposition caused the failure of this project, if that eventuates.

I would simply ask that, at some stage soon, the minister provide us with some details as to the cost benefit analyses that were done on the project before it was decided on - the occupancy rates projected, the sensitivity studies conducted, the various items of sensitivity, internal rates of return, and so on. I do not expect the minister to be able to go through all of that at this stage. It is not fundamental to this particular piece of legislation. However, I am quite interested and I would ask him to supply me with those details.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, with a few other members of this Assembly, I had the pleasure of being shown over the hole in the ground out there at Frances Bay earlier this week. We were given some idea of what it is hoped to achieve there. It is looking very promising. It is hoped to attract prawn boats to use the facility rather than going to Perth or Cairns for refitting and repairs. In fuel terms, it is costly to take vessels around to Perth and there will be a chance now for the Darwin business community to provide those services. If it does so at competitive prices, then I have no doubt that that facility will be well worth while. It will create extra work for the people of Darwin and help to ensure that more of the prawn catch is landed here to be processed and exported overseas. I was staggered to find that a container of prawns could be worth \$0.5m when sold at \$25 a kilo on the Japanese market. It is a lucrative business, and it is to the advantage of the Territory that more and more of the catch is landed here and processed by people in the Territory.

I had not heard before that there is a proposal that the prawn fishing industry be closed down in July for 5 weeks. Apparently, the experts consider that 5 weeks is the best time to have a break from prawn fishing because that is the breeding period and the cessation of fishing will allow the supply of prawns to be maintained. It takes a long time to sail down to Perth or Cairns and back again, and I think that induce many boat owners to use the Frances Bay facility. However, it will be up to the people providing the services to be competitive. If they can do that, then I am sure that the facility will be very successful. I wish it all the very best. I am sure that, in time, it will grow to be a very important facility for the Territory.



Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke in his typical fashion in his anxiety to prove himself in this Assembly in front of his colleagues. I guess it is another reflection of his obvious endeavour to attain leadership. Once again, I gather that his honourable colleagues are outside plotting his downfall as well. However, it is quite clear, from my information, that the member for Arafura has the weight in the battle for leadership even though his term here is probably somewhat limited. Certainly, he has overshadowed the member for Stuart during these 3 weeks.

Mr Leo: Are you speaking to the small boats facility or not?

Mr FINCH: Honourable members opposite have spent the entire sittings denigrating the pursuits and the positive and constructive planning of the government, and this is another classic example. We hear cries about feasibility studies. If the honourable member would cast his mind back over 2 or 3 sittings, he would realise that there were at least 2 volumes of feasibility studies. They were called the Norgaard Report, for the benefit of the member for Stuart. Volumes 1 and 2 were tabled in the Assembly. It is quite obvious that he does not read material that is tabled, but then I doubt very much whether he or his colleagues would understand much of it anyway. That report was extremely comprehensive. It was compiled over a long period by internationally-recognised experts.

That plan is now well in place for the development of the facility at Frances Bay which will provide a much-needed addition to the economic base of the Northern Territory. Not only will it have great potential for the direct benefit of fishing off our northern shores but, more pertinently, it will provide off-season moorings for vessels that need to be refurbished and repaired. Local industry will gain greatly from that. I am astounded that members opposite do not find time to consider the plausible and sensible feasibility studies that are tabled in the Assembly even if only to avoid making fools of themselves.

Mr DONDAS (Ports and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their comments. I would remind the member for Stuart that, in October 1985, stages 2 and 3 of the Norgaard Report were released for public consumption. I was under the impression that the Australian Labor Party had received a copy of Eric Norgaard's Report which gave a very clear outline of his intentions and the recommendations he made to the government.

Earlier this year, stage 4 of Norgaard's Report was released publicly and Norgaard indicated some pathways for consideration in regard to the development of our fishery. Norgaard said that whilst, in its present state, our fishery was worth about \$20m a year, if we were to accept some of his recommendations and put them in place quickly, the industry could be worth of \$60m to \$100m per year. The construction of the safe ship harbour was one of Eric Norgaard's recommendations and the government has actioned it quickly for the benefit of the fishing industry. As I have said during the course of these sittings, we have received expressions of interest from the fishing fleet, indicating that some 40 to 50 boats will take up positions in this harbour this year.

The member for Sadadeen emphasised a valid point which has been made in this Assembly many times. If we have the facilities, we will retain the fishing fleet. That will create employment because the boats need considerable maintenance and repair services. They stay at sea for 5 to 12 weeks at a time and this takes a heavy toll on their equipment. In the past, boats in the fleet have returned to their home bases, places like

Fremantle, Cairns or Karumba, for maintenance. That has been a very expensive exercise for them. Fuel costs alone are as high as \$20 000 per return trip. If we have 40 or 50 fishing vessels based here, the smaller marine maintenance businesses will do very well. An additional benefit of having the fleet based here is that we will be able to obtain the trash fish required for our barramundi aquaculture operation.

The government's acceptance of some of Norgaard's recommendations will provide an excellent foundation for the future development of our fishery. The feasibility studies referred to by the member for Stuart have been carried out. They covered the practicality of the project as well as the financial implications. We know that we have to cover this facility for a couple of years which is why the Port Authority is maintaining a stranglehold on its operation. In some respects, it might have been better for private enterprise to have done it. However, the amendment will change the port boundaries to allow the Port Authority to accept responsibility for the operation of the facility.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

MOTION  
Membership of Privileges Committee

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the member for Fannie Bay, Mr Perron, be discharged from further attendance on the Privileges Committee and that the member for Wagaman, Mr Finch, be appointed in his stead.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr STEELE (Elsey): Mr Speaker, as this is the last day of sittings for this year, I rise to thank all Legislative Assembly staff for the very good service they have provided throughout the year under most difficult circumstances.

Although an exhaustive examination of the standing orders has been undertaken throughout the year, for which I give full credit to the staff and those people who participated, I want to place on record my belief that this parliament should again examine its standing orders. I refer in particular to the third-reading and committee stages of bills which I thought were abused. As an objective observation, I believe that a standing order concerning automatic closure should be looked at. This would apply at 9 pm and, if members wished to continue through the night, they would have to suspend standing orders. I believe that suggestion should be referred to the Standing Orders Committee.

Mr Speaker, I believe also that some members indulge themselves quite fancifully in the adjournment. Without disrespect to those members or their intentions, there are speeches made in this Assembly which are absolutely horrible. I would hesitate to call some members speech makers of any kind, and I say that in a kind way rather than to be nasty. Obviously, the

electorate is the best judge. Unfortunately, the poor old electorate does not even know about the quality of the speeches made here. Let me repeat that some of them are horrifying and should not be heard. If there were some way to expunge them from the record, that would be the best thing that could happen.

Mr Speaker, when you make this reference to the Standing Orders Committee next year, I would suggest that a strong recommendation be made that adjournment speeches be cut back to 10 minutes. That would give us considerably more peace and solitude and we could go home early for a change. I think it would improve the conduct of the business of the Assembly considerably if those amendments were made.

Mr Speaker, I have thanked you. I have thanked the staff and I have thanked my colleagues. All I have to do now is wish you a happy Christmas and good night.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I will be very brief. I would like to record my thanks to the staff of the Assembly for the advice, the service and, above all, the friendship they have offered me during this past year and the 6 or 8 years I have been a member of this Assembly. I wish them all the very best for the Christmas season.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, the member for Millner asked a question concerning BTEC and cattle at Anthony's Lagoon and Eva Downs. I said I would provide the Assembly with further information, and I have it available now.

Interim laboratory tests on tail tags from 2 oxen slaughtered in Townsville on Friday 21 November indicate the presence of tuberculosis. Eva Downs had disease-free status for both tuberculosis and brucellosis. Preliminary investigations indicate that oxen from Anthony's Lagoon were trucked from an Eva Downs yard and tagged with Eva Downs tail tags. Testing will be carried out to determine whether tuberculosis is present on Eva Downs. Neighbours have been advised of the detection of animals suspected to be infected with tuberculosis on Eva Downs so that owners can ensure that boundary fences are secure. I understand that the member for Millner obtained his information when an adjacent property was advised by the department.

Anthony's Lagoon is not free of tuberculosis and brucellosis. Anthony's Lagoon has no infected areas for brucellosis but testing to declare the station free of it has not been completed. There are 2 tuberculosis-infected areas on Anthony's Lagoon. Infection was detected in 1 area earlier this year following the introduction of stock from another station. Eradication testing is continuing.

This year, suspected tuberculosis lesions have been found in cattle from 3 properties in the Barkly Tableland. The required investigation and testing occurred and, in these cases, no further disease was detected. There is no need for legal action unless, during investigation, it is determined that illegal actions have occurred. There is no proof at this stage that anything illegal has occurred. If that situation changes, action will be taken.

I want to say a few words tonight about horticulture in the Territory because there has been a fair amount of publicity given to criticism from within the industry of input by the Department of Primary Production. Beyond doubt, horticulture is proving to be a star performer in the Territory. For instance, last year, horticulture was worth \$5.7m to the Territory compared

with \$3.5m in the previous 12 months. The strength of horticultural performance in recent times is illustrated even more graphically by a comparison of figures from 1977 with the latest statistics. The value of output in 1977 was \$378 000. In other words, there has been a \$5.6m jump in performance inside 10 years.

This improvement owes much to the approach adopted by growers. However, the Department of Primary Production can be justifiably proud of the part it has played also. Not only has the Department of Primary Production continued to devote time and energy to the critical area of extension services but it acknowledges consistently the importance of the study of new plant varieties, cropping techniques and the investigation of improved marketing strategies.

There has been some talk among certain elements within the industry about a lack of resources being allocated to horticulture and the latest Horticultural News contained comment in this regard. It would be fair to say that those responsible for such suggestions have an inadequate grasp of the facts because the facts prove conclusively that there has been a pronounced move towards progressively directing more government energy and resources towards horticulture. Naturally, the government realises the vast potential of the industry to the Territory. In fact, it would be quite accurate to say that there has been a direct correlation between the improved performance of horticulture and the increased level of resources directed towards the industry by the Department of Primary Production and the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority.

Probably the best method by which to demonstrate the increased emphasis being placed on the industry by the government is to compare the allocation of resources being channelled to horticulture and those going to agriculture. There has been criticism that only 4 persons in the department have been related closely to the horticultural industry but that a much larger number have been involved with agriculture. That is simply not true. In 1977, the department had 4 full-time staff working on horticulture and 15 involved in the agricultural program. This year, 21 departmental staff are working full time on horticulture and 25 on agriculture. The breakdown of staff involved on horticulture during the current financial year is 7 scientists, 7 technical staff, 4 support staff and 3 trainees.

In 1981, operational funding expenditure for horticulture was only 30% of that for agriculture. This year, that figure is 83%. It must be emphasised that horticulture is developing mainly on small lots close to Darwin and Katherine and, to a lesser extent, in the Alice Springs region. A large percentage of operational funds can be eaten up in travel costs and time when dealing with industry in the remoter areas which is where most of the agriculture is.

A further example of the continuing trend to direct more departmental resources to horticulture becomes evident with an examination of emphasis on the service area. Entomology, chemistry and research station resources are divided evenly between agriculture and horticulture but, in the remaining 2 service areas, plant pathology and plant quarantine, 80% of resources are directed to horticulture and only 20% to agriculture.

A major headache confronting the industry is the recent discovery of fruit fly larvae in a consignment of Territory mangoes sent to South Australia. South Australia is expected to gazette against native Territory fruit fly shortly. The result of this will be that Territory fruit and vegetables classified as hosts for native fruit flies will have to be fumigated with

ethylene dibromide before they are accepted for the South Australian market. Unfortunately tomatoes, one of the major Territory crops on the Adelaide market, cannot withstand the fumigation. Unless we can come up with a tomato which will withstand fumigation, we stand to lose a market worth \$150 000 this year.

As a contingency measure, the department is investigating potential new markets for Territory tomatoes. I intend to approach my South Australian counterpart in an effort to determine whether his government will accept produce dipped in dimethoate, a pesticide treatment acceptable in other states and which tomatoes can withstand. Unfortunately, South Australia does not accept that particular treatment at present.

Another major hurdle facing the horticultural industry is to find a senior horticulturist to replace Terry Piggott who left the job some time ago. This has resulted in criticism from within the industry. We have had problems in finding a suitable person to replace Terry Piggott, a well-qualified person who went across to ADMA. To date, no applicant for the job has been able to meet the standard required and there is no way the department intends to burden the industry with a senior horticulturist who is not up to the task. However, it is hoped to have the position filled early in the new year. I am informed that, as a result of the latest advertisements placed in Britain and New Zealand, because we could not find a suitable person in Australia, we have had some very good applications and we expect to have a good person in the job very soon.

Mr Speaker, that is all I wanted to say on that subject. I too wish to thank the staff of the Assembly for all their efforts over the last year. I wish all the staff and members of the Assembly a merry Christmas.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there are a couple of points I wish to raise in the adjournment. The first relates to the Yuendumu youth centre. The Minister for Community Development and the Minister for Health know exactly what I am talking about. An amazing amount of work has been done by the people at Yuendumu in an attempt to upgrade their youth centre. The member for Arafura, the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and I inspected it during the Yuendumu Sports weekend. I am most disappointed that the Territory government has not matched the funds offered by the federal government.

Mr Dale: He offered money but he has not come up with it.

Mr EDE: No, and that is the point that I am making. I hope the honourable minister will indicate how much the Northern Territory government is willing to put up so that we can obtain those matching funds from the federal government.

Mr Dale: He made a promise when he was down there but he did not say there would be matching funds.

Mr EDE: I raised this with the minister in a letter of 4 November. I hope the minister will give me an answer in the near future so that we can ensure that this facility is not threatened by closure over the school holidays. We need to have those school programs in place during what is a very critical time for the youth in that area.

Mr Speaker, I will not be quite so kind to the minister about the Anningie water supply. The minister has said that a Mexican dam will not work ...

Mr Dale: I did not say that.

Mr EDE: He said that his experts have said ...

Mr Dale: That is what I said.

Mr EDE: ... that the clay floor is not such that it would hold the water. I was there towards the end of the long drought and water was still moving down the creek. Of course, when the impermeable wall is in place, the water will still come down and will back up behind it. I do not accept the assurance of the experts quite so readily. I would like the minister to supply me with actual documentation from his experts so that I can check it out with the people who have done tests for me and assured me that it is possible. They said it might not be quite as cheap as we had originally thought, but that it would definitely be a possibility. The community is in grave danger because of lack of water.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you and your predecessor, the Clerk, the attendants, Hansard and, indeed, all members of the Assembly's staff for the work they have done this year. In fact, some of them are assisting me to prepare a submission to the House Committee to have a decent brand of beer stocked in the members' lounge. We will be working on that.

We have had many late sittings this year, including the famous all-night marathon. The staff has maintained a good standard of service right through that period. It does them great credit. The staff are always working hard to provide service to us and I think it is important to acknowledge that. Mr Speaker, I wish honourable members, yourself and the staff of the Assembly a very happy Christmas.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I had not intended to speak in the adjournment this afternoon. I was prompted to do so by the member for Elsey's statements about potential changes to the standing orders of this Assembly. I want to lodge the strongest possible protest against his suggestions. When debate becomes uncomfortable or onerous for them, it is not uncommon for government members to suggest that the easiest way to handle it would be to adjust standing orders to suit the government. That is precisely what the member for Elsey was suggesting.

The member's comments were directed at 2 areas. The first related to changes to the standing orders that were made in respect of the committee stage of bills. The second concerned what he saw as the poor quality of debate in the adjournment and how he felt that might be dealt with. The government did something unprecedented in this Assembly when it used a matter of public importance proposal as a means of raising an issue that it wished to debate. I do not doubt its ability or right to do this. I am saying that the government should adjust its practices and conventions so that they reflect the uniqueness of this parliament. This is the smallest parliament in Australia. It is unicameral, not bicameral. We have no House of review. My comments about the government's use of an MPI are completely relevant to the member for Elsey's suggestions about changing standing orders in respect of the committee stage of bills.

We sit for about 20 days out of 365. We have a general business day on 1 sitting day in 12 ...

Mr Perron: That is too many.

Mr B. COLLINS: The member for Fannie Bay interjects that that is too many. That reflects the government's attitude to this Assembly. It sees it as an irrelevancy and considers that things would be far better run from the Chan Building across the road without any reference to the Assembly at all. Of course, that is a comfortable position for the government to adopt and the member for Fannie Bay does so consistently. It is not a good way to run the Northern Territory or any other place in democratic society. The parliament is designed to act as a check upon the executive. That is what the government and the member for Fannie Bay do not like. That is what is behind these suggested changes to the standing orders. The government wants to curtail debate as far as possible.

According to both Odgers and Pettifer, MPIs are designed to provide an opportunity for the minority in a parliament to be heard. A parliament consists of its members; it is not a convenience for the government of the day, irrespective of its political complexion. MPIs give an opportunity to the minority, including the opposition and independent members, to air matters of concern to them. That is why they are known as grievance debates in other places. In the federal parliament, opportunities are provided each week for the opposition and independent members to raise matters which are of concern to them. That happens in other parliaments also where they are dealt with as matters of general business.

Mr Hatton: We have them every day.

Mr B. COLLINS: In response to the Chief Minister's interjection, I know he has only been in the Assembly for a couple of years, but I would like to let him know that MPIs are a daily matter in the federal parliament because they provide one of the means available to his colleagues in the federal opposition to use parliament as it is supposed to be used - as a forum for debate.

Mr Speaker, to quote 1 of your predecessors, a former member for Elsey and a Speaker for whom I had great respect, the Assembly is a 'House of debate'. That is precisely how it should be used, not as an inconvenience that has to be endured by the government for 20 days a year. The government's attitude is reflected in the suggestion that the standing orders be changed further despite the fact that an extremely thorough and painstaking review has already been undertaken. I think all honourable members opposite would be on very dangerous ground if they started to adjust the standing orders because of the quality of debate.

I am sure the member for Elsey made a mistake, which perhaps indicates his ignorance of the standing orders, when he referred to abuse of the third-reading and the committee stage. What he meant, of course, was simply the committee stage of debate - not the third reading. That change was made deliberately by the committee that considered the standing orders. It was the subject of a very long and cooperative debate between government and opposition members of that committee. The decision to change that standing order was taken deliberately because it reflects the small number of sitting days of this Assembly and the fact that we are a single House without a House of review. The limit on the number of times a member may speak in the committee stage of debate on a bill was removed deliberately to allow for more proper consideration of bills. We have seen the effectiveness of that in these sittings because it has resulted - as it will in every sittings - in better legislation for the people of the Northern Territory.

I point out to members of this Assembly one thing that they should know already, which is that the standing orders of this Assembly now constitute the best set of standing orders provided for any parliament in Australia. We have conducted the best and most recent review of a set of standing orders that I know of, and they should be retained in their present form because they work well. The problems perceived by the member for Elsey can be catered for very efficiently in the committee stage. Standing order 70 provides the Speaker with the discretion to silence a member who engages in tedious or repetitious debate.

Mr D.W. Collins: Get the spirit of Christmas. Be cheerful!

Mr B. COLLINS: I do not believe in more than the usual degree of hypocrisy. That is why I believe in using debate in this Assembly for substantive matters rather than to offer fake cheer to people whom normally we would not cross the street to greet.

I have no doubt, Mr Speaker, that you are perfectly able to determine when members become tedious or repetitious, which is more likely to occur in the committee stage of debate than at other times, and standing order 70 provides you with the ability to silence a member. It would be a retrogressive step to bring in limits to debate when we have just revised the standing orders to create a process which results in better legislation. I am confident, Mr Speaker, that if a member abuses this new privilege in the committee stage, you will use standing order 70.

Should members of the government feel that you are not exercising your discretion under standing order 70 correctly, they have standing orders 78 and 79 at their disposal whereby they can simply terminate the contribution of the individual member. I believe that the proper use of standing orders 70, 78 and 79, combined with the very progressive move adopted in the review to remove the limit on the number of times a member may speak during the committee stage of a bill, results in better legislation and better government for the people of the Northern Territory.

Turning to the other suggestion of the member for Elsey, that we should limit the time permitted for adjournment speeches and so reduce even further the opportunities for members to be heard, I oppose that just as vociferously. It is no good making references to other parliaments. We set out deliberately to design the best set of standing orders for this Assembly, reflecting its uniqueness in terms of size and the small number of sitting days. It is essential to allow 15 minutes for each speaker in adjournment speeches. There are many members of the government's backbench who do not have the same opportunities as frontbench members to bring on debates whenever they want to, and I have no doubt they would agree with me. It is specious to argue that the time limit should be reduced because the quality of debate is poor. That is quite irrelevant.

Mr Perron: You were not here for many of them.

Mr B. COLLINS: In response to that interjection, I would suggest that the member for Fannie Bay refer to the index of Hansard over the last 9 years. I think he would have to eat his words.

Mr Perron: How many have you sat through? You make your speech and then disappear.



Mr B. COLLINS: The honourable member completely misunderstands the use of the adjournment. There is no particular virtue attached to a member remaining physically in this Assembly for a certain number of hours. The purpose of the adjournment is to give individual members of the Assembly, rather than the government, an opportunity to speak on matters of particular political concern to them. An individual member may have some disagreement with the policy of the government or the opposition, and occasionally I have expressed my own views about things that were being done by the opposition.

More importantly, the adjournment gives a member the opportunity to represent his or her electorate in the Assembly which sits only 20 days in the year. There are some members who make very effective use of that. I suspect that the member for Koolpinyah may be a member at which the member for Elsey was throwing brickbats. I believe the member for Koolpinyah makes extremely effective electorate use of the adjournment in this Assembly. That is precisely why members need 15 minutes and not 10.

I am appalled that, so soon after the completion of a very thorough and cooperative review of the standing orders of this Assembly, a government member should suggest we revise them again in order to curtail opportunities, both in the adjournment and in the committee stage of bills, for individual members to contribute to the work of this Assembly. I hope that all members will agree with me and ensure that those suggestions are stillborn.

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, Mr Paul Dibb's review of Australia's defence capabilities was a significant document and one which highlighted the vulnerability of the Northern Territory. It recognised the fact that northern Australia's difficult terrain and immense coastline will be the likely focus of attack for any aggressive nation in the future. However, in outlining a strategy aimed at the effective protection of Australia in circumstances foreseeable to the end of this century, the review does not go far enough. The reason for this is explained in Mr Dibb's overtly optimistic statements that 'Australia is one of the most secure countries in the world' and 'there is no conceivable prospect of any power contemplating invasion of our continent'.

Mr Dibb maintains that it would take 10 years and massive external support for any regional power to threaten Australia seriously, although he concedes that lower levels of conflict may occur. His review, therefore, proposes a denial strategy; that is, a layered defence system across the north of Australia which would protect the sea and air gap between Australia and its neighbours for approximately 100 nautical miles. This is to be backed by highly mobile land forces which can undertake mopping up operations against the small group of aggressors who may penetrate those defences.

The strengthening of the northern defence position and the increased emphasis on intelligence and surveillance deserve praise but there are serious flaws in the review which must be addressed. Despite its frequently detailed analysis of the deployment of forces and the introduction of early warning systems, it works strictly from the hypothesis that any potential enemy will be aware of Mr Dibb's 10-year prognosis and act accordingly, restricting its threat to lower level conflict. It makes no allowance for massed and well-armed forces penetrating the layered defence line to fight destructively on Australian soil. It makes no allowance for Australian forces to resolve major conflicts on Australian territory in Australia's favour. Mr Dibb's doubtful argument is that no island continent has ever been subjected to such an attack, although history is a record of tragic first occasions. Moreover, this defence strategy does not allow for forward defence, a recognised

military philosophy which Mr Beazley dismisses as 'a doctrine of imperialism'. Mr Beazley claims that forward defence also denies the achievements of our Asian neighbours and causes neglect of essential capabilities for our own national security.

The Dibb review sees forward defence as largely unnecessary, maintaining that Australia's Asian and Pacific neighbours have intrinsically stable governments and social structures. But there are obvious pointers to the contrary: consistent unease resulting from the French presence in the Pacific; border tensions between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea; continuing unrest in the Philippines where Aquino struggles to control the military and the communist people's army, claiming more than 16 000 active members, resists her peace overtures; Kampuchea where there are now 170 000 Vietnamese forces; Vietnam which, by now, has the fourth largest standing army in the world; and the Soviet Union's influence in the Pacific, which has increased steadily and insidiously in recent months, as so-called 'commercial' overtures have been made to Fiji, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Western Samoa.

Moreover, as the United States naval influence has receded, the Soviet presence in the Pacific has increased systematically over the past 15 years. Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam has provided the USSR with the largest forward deployment naval base in the world. Here the Soviets have built 5 piers of their own in addition to taking control of 2 built by the US Navy. The Soviet Pacific Fleet now totals 720 ships, including 125 submarines, 80 surface vessels and the Minsk aircraft carrier. It is estimated that one-third of the Soviet Union's warheads are targeted on eastern Asia and the Pacific.

Can this be summarily dismissed as a non-threatening scenario? The Dibb review assures us that there is no conceivable threat in the region for 10 years. Paul Dibb himself stated: 'The warning time for some political and strategic events is extremely short. Seemingly, we are often surprised by the unpredictable or irrational act of a nation state'. I disagree, Mr Speaker. I think few of us are surprised by such unpredictable or irrational acts. The events of recent years, well publicised by the Australian media, have demonstrated amply to most of us the extreme volatility of domestic politics in the region which surrounds Australia. We are not surprised by it but, just in case that unpredictability, that volatility, should be turned against us, we would like to feel that our country was prepared and that a comprehensive defence system was in place. We would like to know that aggression could be intercepted or allayed. How many of us would be comfortable knowing that all our defence force could do was cross its fingers and hope for low level conflict?

When the unpredictable represents a danger to Australia, Australia must be in a position to counter it. It must not be forced to confine itself to a limited, defensive, protectionist system. ANZUS, the tripartite alliance between the United States, New Zealand and Australia, is a thing of the past. The Dibb review describes the continuing alliance of ANZUS between the United States and Australia as 'significant', but claims that, for over a decade, we have recognised the United States as 'a global power with a variety of interests, none of them centred in Australia'. However, it describes our relationship with New Zealand as of 'particular importance'. It states that New Zealand's security is dependent on our own and that any threat to Australia is a threat to New Zealand.

I do not wish to deny the value of good relationships with New Zealand nor to minimise New Zealand's role in the Pacific, but I must insist that the alliance between Australia and United States is more than 'significant'.

Paul Dibb himself admits that 'material acquisition and support from the United States continues to be considerable'. We have, he says, 'access to United States intelligence resources which can provide technical military intelligence coverage beyond the comprehension of previous military planners'. Having admitted that, he then minimises the alliance claiming that the access we provide for unarmed B52 bombers and warships, together with the operation of joint facilities at Pine Gap, North-West Cape and Nurrungur, is likely to assume increasing significance in the years immediately ahead because all this is a 'sufficient, tangible contribution to the alliance from the perspective of both parties'.

Again, I disagree. We need increased support from the United States and we must make our appreciation of its role as our major ally very clear. How can we accept this review's argument that we provide for our immediate defence needs at the expense of demands placed upon us by the United States, when the ANZUS Treaty specifically states that, in the event of an armed attack upon any of the parties, the parties to the treaty will 'act to meet the common danger'? Of course we must have an effective Australian defence force capable of satisfying requirements for true self-help. At the same time, we must look realistically at the wider world scene while working closely to support a strong ally.

We are charged under the 5-power defence arrangements to provide training, technical expertise and forces to assist Malaysian-Singaporean defence forces. How can we do that when restricted to limited defence? We are also charged by membership of the United Nations to provide peace keeping forces in the world's trouble spots. How can we answer these obligations if we follow the isolationist philosophy of the Dibb review, a policy which leaves us hoping for nothing worse than low level conflict and leaves us praying that Dibb is indeed a soothsayer and has got his 10-year equation right? How can we be effective in the Asian and Pacific region if we retreat? How can we assist the United States and expect greater support from the United States if we are confined to a lower level defence role?

As I said at the beginning, there is value in the Dibb Report, mainly because it shows us the glaring truth that we have no effective defence against attack at this time. The report has virtues, but our whole strategy needs to be more realistic, more prepared for the unexpected, more ready to meet all contingencies. To insist that any kind of wholesale attack cannot take place is nonsense. Before 1974, many people would have dismissed the notion that a mere cyclone could wipe out a major Australian city. Now the worst natural disaster in Australia's history is a matter of record. It would be too appalling if Australia itself became, by default, a matter of record. To create an effective defence force in the air and on sea and land is expensive. Defence is expensive. It also happens to be the price of peace and freedom. I am disappointed that the Dibb Report has been removed from the Notice Paper as an item of business because I believe it is a significant report and members should have been given the opportunity to comment on it.

In closing my contribution to the adjournment, I would like to make a couple of comments. First, the member for Arafura raised the fact that the government had instigated the discussion of a matter of public importance. I do not know of anything that gives the opposition the divine right to bring on MPIs. Pettifer indicates that, between 1975 and 1980, 13% of the MPIs in the House of Representatives were initiated by the government, although it is true that they were not proposed by ministers of the government. However, when a matter is of major concern and importance to the people of the Northern Territory, it must be able to be proposed for discussion as a matter of public importance and debated in this Chamber.

I hope that you, Mr Speaker, and the staff of the Assembly enjoy the festive season. The staff have worked extremely hard. We have had late sittings, and I know that they work long hours. I understand also that, on occasions there have been some problems with the car-parking arrangements for those people working late. However, I wish them well, Mr Speaker.

Finally, every other member has commented about Territory Tidy Towns, and I missed out the other night because I ran out of time. I would like to say that, once again, Port Darwin has been successful. I think it is one of the few towns that has received an award each year in the Territory Tidy Towns competition. I am very pleased that we did not mar that record this year. I would like to congratulate all those people who were involved in helping to obtain that award in the electorate of Port Darwin, and my electorate secretary, Elizabeth Eustance, who received an award for the best documentation of the work that had been done in the electorate.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I rise in the adjournment tonight primarily to express some concern about a situation that I have observed in the media over the past few weeks. As honourable members will be aware, the subjects of Kakadu, the possible inclusion on the World Heritage List of stage 2 of Kakadu and mining in Kakadu have been the focus of much national interest over the last few weeks. The whole matter has been the subject of debates in the national parliament and of considerable court activity by various governments and individuals. Generally, one might say, it has been one of the issues of the day.

I have not been south during this period, unfortunately, but in my observation of local TV coverage of the events of the last couple of weeks relating to Kakadu stage 2, I have noted that much of the footage that has been shown on television during programs on this item of interest has been of the most magnificent aspects of stage 1 of Kakadu. I guess that TV stations would say that they have to run whatever footage they have on file or whatever footage they can obtain and, of course, most of the file footage of Kakadu held by any television station in Australia would be of stage 1: the magnificent Twin Falls, the escarpment country and the lagoons. Stage 1 contains some absolutely prime tourist country.

In my view, what is grossly unfair is the fact that this footage has been run whilst the commentaries on news items have related to the debate about whether or not stage 2 should be listed as World Heritage material, whether or not stage 2 is suitable country to rate World Heritage listing, and whether or not mining should take place in stage 2 of Kakadu National Park. Mr Speaker, you can imagine visitors watching those TV programs time after time, particularly those from the south of Australia who are unfamiliar with the area, and being somewhat confused about stage 1, stage 2 and stage 3. Whilst seeing this film, they hear voices talking about the Northern Territory pursuing its line against listing and permission for mining. They hear representatives of mining companies saying mining should be permitted and the federal government saying that it should not. From all of that, it would be very easy to obtain a distorted view when forming your own opinion. If the presentation is distorted, then the view formed from it will be distorted.

Of course, we are all aware that our opinions on matters that we are not familiar with are influenced by the media, by and large through television coverage. If we do not know very much about a subject or a place, obviously our views, opinions, attitudes and voting intentions - if it goes that far on any issue - will be influenced by presentations through the media. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the media to do its very best to present a fair and

balanced view. I do not think any member of it would argue against that. With the state of television and communications in Australia today, with the possibility of sending video clips up, down and across the country, and indeed across the world, in a very short period, and with networking and agencies intermingled, obviously big TV stations can obtain just about any footage of anything they want. Certainly, they could obtain it of stage 2 of Kakadu if they wanted it. Indeed, they could even commission someone to shoot some footage. That could be arranged in a couple of days if someone wanted to take the trouble.

It is a national park and we are talking about a World Heritage listing. When we talk about the billions of dollars worth of minerals which lie under the ground out there, we are talking about resources that are of national significance. It is a national story. The footage I have seen in Darwin - relayed from a southern major Australian channel on at least one occasion that I recall - in my view, grossly distorted the facts. Pretty pictures though they were, they grossly distorted the story. That saddens me a little and I guess the best opportunity I have of expressing that grievance is in today's adjournment.

Mr Speaker, in a sense, the honourable member for Arafura made history once more today with his classic interjection which will be seen in Hansard tomorrow: 'Hiding behind Hansard'. The member for Arafura was referring to an interjection from the member for Flynn that he was prepared to be judged by what he said a week or so ago. The member for Arafura said: 'Ha! You are hiding behind Hansard'. I think the implication that a member was stooping so low, because he put forward the defence that he was prepared to be judged by what he had said, is a classic and has to be recorded as such.

Lastly, Mr Speaker, I convey my good wishes to yourself, the Clerk and the staff of the Assembly on this last day of sittings for the year. I would like to record my special appreciation for the efforts of 2 members of staff who may be the most recent to join the department. I refer to the 2 people who have assisted me to establish the office of the Public Accounts Committee, Dave Rice and Judy Cumberland. They have worked very hard in putting the whole show together there. I am sure that the work that they have done to date will benefit us all for a very long time to come.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I appreciated the comments from the member for Port Darwin. I suspect his comments on foreign affairs may foreshadow the creation of a new portfolio of foreign affairs in the Northern Territory government. If that is, in fact, the case I hope that one of its first initiatives will be to normalise relations with those dangerous powers to the south of us in Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney.

The reason I rise to speak in this evening's adjournment is to present, once again, some awards on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Injury to the English Language which, as honourable members will be aware, glorifies under the acronym of SPIEL. At the end of these sittings, SPIEL has some honourable mentions to make and then announces its customary general award for purity of expression in the English language. We have a new prize to present at these sittings, Mr Speaker, namely a tautology competition. As you will be aware, there have been a number of competitors, but more of that later.

There are a couple of honourable mentions, and I suppose the foremost amongst them, Mr Speaker, was your own creative interpretation of the gospel according to St Matthew during the morning prayer. However, no more on that in case I am ruled out of order. Another honourable mention, which is, in

fact, the wooden-spooner in the purity of expression competition, was a comment from the member for Arafura today. Certainly, it was not a wooden spoonerism, but I think the shining wit was quite evident.

Mr Speaker, there is another honourable mention, and I must admit that I am forced to climb down in this regard to the member for Arafura. I made a note here during his speech about Kakadu National Park. He referred to his own experience of compiling 'a flora' on the region. I was quite sure that a flora was not grammatical. However, I am quite happy to place on record - and I know it will be of enormous relief to the member for Arafura - that I recant. I apologise humbly from the bottom of my bended knee.

To the awards themselves, Mr Speaker. For the general award for purity of expression in the English language, there were a large number of competitors and I will go through them as briefly as I can. We had the wonderful use of the noun 'condolence' by the Leader of Government Business, who got a couple of honourable mentions actually. He said: 'With your condolence, I will provide the information later'. I assume that by this, in fact, he meant 'with your concurrence'. He followed that quite quickly with 'I will answer the question as best as I can'. Mr Speaker, with your infinite understanding of linguistic purity, you will be aware that he had 2 choices. He could have said, 'I will answer the question as best I can' or 'I will answer the question as well as I can'. Certainly, 'I will answer the question as best as I can' is clearly ungrammatical and a fine entry in the competition. A further entry from the Leader of Government Business was his reference to 'a natural phenomena'. That, of course, should have been 'a natural phenomenon'. That was not an original entry, Mr Speaker. I think the Leader of Government Business has put that one in before but, certainly, it warrants an honourable mention.

The Minister for Transport and Works' grasp of verbal morphology is perhaps not quite as good as your own, Sir. In sharp criticism of the opposition he said, 'Not 1 of the opposition speakers have spoke to the motion'. I think an in-service course on past participles is called for for the Minister for Transport and Works. I do not wish to offend parliamentary convention or break standing orders here, Mr Speaker, but clearly 1 of the glowing entries in this session's competitions was the phrase subsequently ruled unparliamentary by yourself. Of course, it was directed at myself but, having taken it in the customary spirit, his reference to a 'load of educated unparliamentary language' was really quite extraordinary. That was a very good entry.

In the neologism section - and I do not want to refer to statements that are already on the Notice Paper - there has been the use of this word, 'patriated'. That is quite an interesting past participle. In fact, it is so interesting that the Oxford Dictionary does not record it. 'The options for the control of this patriated or new act are also set out in the paper'. You will recall that reference. For the benefit of the scribe, the word he is looking for is 'devolved'. More of that next sittings when the actual paper comes up for debate.

We had another creative plural from the Chief Minister who came up with 3 stunning entries. He said that the federal government 'will look like geoses' before the International Court. Certainly, that was a most creative plural and SPIEL has taken that into consideration. Also, on numerous occasions, he has used a creative pronunciation of the word 'obfuscation'. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will be aware that the Oxford Dictionary gives the pronunciation of 'obfuscation' exactly as I am saying it. The Chief Minister

included it in entry after entry - and I think really we should have a rule against multiple entries in the competition - however, he insisted on making reference to 'obfewscation'. He needs to pay attention to that or, at least, submit only 1 entry if he insists on using it. The other entry from the Chief Minister is his reference to 'rhetoric'. That is a questionable entry. In fact, that may be grammatical. Certainly, it is a borderline entry. I place it on record as an entry of interest.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the winning entry in the general section came from the absent but honourable Minister for Mines and Energy and again it is in the plural section. The plural section had some fine entries but I am afraid that the Minister for Mines and Energy has won hands down in the general section this year. You will recall the Minister for Mines and Energy, in full flight in the Kakadu debate, referring to the bases on which World Heritage listing is obtained. He was referring to the federal government's application for World Heritage listing for Kakadu stage 2 and, slamming his fist upon the desk, he said: 'It does not stack up on 1 criteria'. I think the sheer majesty of it will not be lost on any honourable member. Quite clearly, that is the outstanding winner in the general section.

I am hoping to obtain sponsorship for future presentations of these awards. I will be writing to business houses and I may even write to the University College of the Northern Territory to see if it is interested.

In the tautology section, we have had 5 quality entries. Again, the Chief Minister featured strongly. Certainly, he has tried hard. I will come to that later. There was a quality entry from the member for Leanyer with his reference to 'cojointly'. In debate yesterday, he referred to revocation and Planning Authority determinations as being desirable and that they should be done 'cojointly'. That is an interesting entry because it is an internal tautology. Certainly, the member for Leanyer deserves something of a consolation prize for creativity in this regard because, quite clearly, that should read 'revocation and Planning Authority determinations should be done jointly'. Perhaps there is a particular force that he is trying to express there, but it is a very creative internal tautology and he deserves a consolation prize for that entry.

Turning to the Chief Minister's tautologies, there was a neck and neck race here. Perhaps the poorest entry from the Chief Minister was during debate yesterday when he said: 'I urge the Assembly to reject this proposed bill'. Mr Speaker, with your deep understanding of the Westminster Parliamentary system, you will appreciate that the term 'bill', by its very nature is, in fact, a proposed act of parliament. The Clerk may care to comment on that, and I have no doubt he will at some stage in the future, but I am prepared to register that as a tautology. Not a good entry, not a quality entry, but a good try. We had more and better from the honourable Chief Minister when he made a reference in debate on the first day of these sittings. He was probably a bit dodgy on the first day, but his reference to a young youth was very good. The prime entry we had from the Chief Minister came yesterday when he referred to 'the best sheltered coward's castle'. I am not quite sure if that fits in as an honest-to-goodness tautology - it is shading over into the mixed metaphor area - but it is quality. That is quality and there is no doubt about that.

However, as the outright winner of the tautology competition, I have chipped the Leader of the Opposition, and I trust he will take it in good part. The outright prize as winner in the tautology section went to the Leader of the Opposition with his praise of a particular initiative of the

government as a 'progressive step forward'. So, we have those 2 winners, and those honourable mentions. As I said, I will be seeking sponsorship for next year's competition.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I would like to thank you for your tolerance and, particularly, to thank the staff of the Assembly for their tolerance. I certainly do appreciate the efforts they make to render life almost agreeable.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, it is always a joy to follow the member for MacDonnell, especially after he has given the Assembly the benefit of his expertise in the English language.

This afternoon, the Clerk coined a new phrase, and I hope that the member for MacDonnell will write it down as I spell it to him 'persona voxoid'. Basically, in translation, 'persona' relates to the individual, 'vox' is the voice, and 'oid' is the mental state. Of course, the member for MacDonnell really fits into the category described by this newly-coined phrase because it means a person who loves to hear himself speak.

That is nearly as good as the term that I introduced during the course of the year which was 'dontopedics'. Once again, I applied it to the honourable member for MacDonnell. Basically, that means putting one's foot in one's mouth. Perhaps that is a tautology also.

I rise in this adjournment debate to put on record my sincere thanks to the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and the staff of the Assembly. Of course, there have been some changes during the course of the year. The latest change will become a very important facet of our Assembly proceedings and operations and that, of course, is the pulls of question time being made available during the course of the same day. I think that will become a very valuable reference tool for members of the Assembly though perhaps not necessarily to be quoted from. But, at least, I do not think opposition members will be able to say, 'You said this morning that ...' and get away with it, as they have been able to do in the past.

Mr Smith: We have always been right.

Mr DONDAS: Yes, you've always been right.

Mr Speaker, I wish the Clerk and his staff all the best for the festive season. It has been a very busy year. Reference has been made already this evening to the all-night stand that we held in March this year. I think we adjourned at about 5.50 am. Of course, many members would be aware of the initiative adopted that night in an endeavour to hasten the process of presenting papers, especially second-reading speeches. The member for Arafura has made some comment in regard to standing orders this evening, and I would like to propose to members an idea that we might take into consideration during the course of 1987. In most cases, second-reading speeches are long and involved and finish up being printed in Hansard anyway. Sometimes they are over 10 or 15 pages long. In many instances, the opposition have requirements - and I support that - and if there is a complicated bill we should try to provide as much information as we possibly can. Sometimes, there is a hesitancy on my part to deliver long, second-reading speeches because they take 15 or 20 minutes to read. If everything were included that the department wanted to put in, it could finish up taking half an hour. If 4 or 5 ministers present second-reading speeches, and each takes 25 to 30 minutes, that takes up a great deal of the Assembly's time. With the agreement of the Leader of the Opposition or the Opposition Whip, for 1987 I



think we should consider seriously the proposition that we be able to table our second-reading speeches.

Mr B. Collins: We can do it now. We have done it.

Mr DONDAS: Yes, but we have done it only on that famous night. I think we did it once then, and really that was because people were feeling pretty tired at about 3.45 am when somebody jumped up with a second-reading speech which would take about 30 minutes to deliver.

Finally, I would like to thank the Clerk and his staff for all the assistance they have given me personally during this year, and I wish everybody well in the festive season.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to express my thanks to the Clerk and his staff for the job they have done this year. Certainly, life has been made much easier for members on this side of the Assembly through the efforts of the staff and we have picked up a few wrinkles along the way. 'Wrinkles' was not quite the word I was looking for! Through discussions with the Clerk and his staff, we have learnt a few new tricks along the way in terms of how matters may be handled. Distribution of the transcript of questions in the early afternoon has been a progressive step and very helpful to members. Hopefully, with new technology and the move into the Nelson Building, we will all have much better facilities which will enable all of us, staff and members, to perform more effectively than has been possible with the limited facilities here.

Mr Speaker, I wish you, honourable members and the staff of the Assembly a happy and safe festive season, and I shall look forward to resuming the battle next year.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

ABC sports coverage, lack of 1055, 1056, 1057  
Access to shops at Darwin Airport 1286  
Adjournment debates 1563, 1569  
Agile wallabies for human consumption 1280  
Alcorta, Frank 1187  
Alice Springs -  
    Aboriginal social clubs 1393, 1394  
    airlines policy 1189  
    Airport facilities 1189, 1492  
    alcohol consumption 1393  
    alcohol-related offences 1394  
    power reticulation 1484  
    south post office 1484  
    town planning 1189  
Amoonguna, health services 1194, 1206  
Anningie community water supply 878, 1119, 1125, 1566  
Anthony's Lagoon 1564  
Anyinginyi Health Centre 1498  
Areyonga, health services 1194, 1206  
Australia-based trawlers for surveillance 1183  
Australian reserve pilots scheme 1050  
Ayers Rock -  
    apology by Willesee program 1277  
    temporary closure of 1275  
BTEC 1564  
Channel 8 broadcasts 1187  
Cigarette advertising on buses 1384, 1388  
CSIRO, Kapalga research area 1099, 1103, 1109, 1113, 1124  
Community assistance funding 1118  
Cost of third party insurance for Gove residents 1291  
Courts, inadequacy of sentencing 1190  
Crocodiles -  
    at Nhulunbuy 1290  
    in Darwin Harbour 1289  
    living in harmony with 1290  
Cubillo, Edward Francis, death 1098  
Cycle bridge between Casuarina and Rapid Creek 1202  
Cyclists, dangerous practices of 1388, 1390  
Darwin -  
    Airport, access to shops 1286  
    Institute of Technology and University College 1113, 1115, 1204  
    parking in CBD 1098  
Davis, Stephen, sale of Aboriginal artifacts 1195  
Defence desert storage area for redundant weaponry 1049  
Dibb Report 1570  
Discrimination 1105  
Draft Katherine Rural Area Plan, response to 1380  
Drivers, dangerous practices of young licensees 1388  
Education in Aboriginal communities 1118, 1392  
Emergency telephone number 1048  
Eva Downs 1564  
Federal taxes and charges 1126  
Funding for recreational facilities in remote communities 1196, 1286  
Ghan Preservation Society 1383  
Goat milk 1487  
Grants Commission funding 1121

- Hansard -
  - on-screen editing 1185
  - Parliamentary Record, placement on computer 1185
  - transcript of question time 1180, 1185, 1578
- Health services for Jay Creek, Areyonga and Amoonguna 1194, 1206
- Horticulture, government input 1564
- Housing Commission, executive housing scheme 1192, 1205
- Jay Creek, health services 1194, 1205
- Jindalee radar facility 1051
- Kakadu -
  - debate, television coverage 1573
  - video 1099, 1103, 1109, 1113, 1124
- Kapalga research area 1099, 1103, 1109, 1113, 1124
- Katherine -
  - traffic congestion 1121
  - Rural Area Plan, response to draft 1380
  - strategy plan 1121
- Lasseter's Casino extensions 1188
- Legislative Assembly, annual report of department 1185
- Madden, Dr Richard 1052, 1181, 1188, 1199
- Mango Harvest Festival 1107
- Manhole covers, importation of 1387
- Manhole ladders 1387
- Matters of Public Importance 1568, 1572
- Meat inspection service, DPI 881
- Member for Jingili -
  - comments about member for Arnhem 1277, 1283, 1285
  - invitation to visit Arnhem Land 1286, 1495
- Member for Wagaman -
  - comments about member for Arafura 1122
  - comments about member for Stuart 1292
- Menzies School of Health Research report 1186, 1191
- Milingimbi artifacts 1195, 1198
- Mount Allan Station 1485
- Nhulunbuy, third party insurance costs 1291
- Nightcliff -
  - beach stinger net 1203
  - cycle path to Casuarina 1202
  - traffic congestion 1203
- Northern Territory government, involvement in land claim hearings 1287, 1291
- Northern Territory Public Service -
  - competition with private enterprise 1192
  - politicisation 1054
- Palmerston -
  - bus service 1381, 1391
  - recreation facilities 1382
- Petrol sniffing -
  - Bickerton Island 1197, 1279
  - deterrent action 1197, 1206, 1279, 1492
  - imposition of penalties through legislation 1196, 1206, 1277
  - use of outstations for rehabilitation 1196
- Public servants, paying hobbies 1191
- Rapid Creek Water Gardens 1057, 1283, 1493
- Reptiles, permits for 1389
- Road signage -
  - on Territory highways 1285
  - value to tourism 1285

Second-reading speeches, tabling 1578  
 Settlements paid to senior public servants on termination 1182, 1188  
 1199, 1201  
 SPIEL awards 1574  
 Standing orders 1563, 1567  
 Stiles, Edward James Lester, death 877, 881  
 Teachers, high turnover 1118, 1392  
 Television coverage of Kakadu debate 1573  
 Tender system, problems with 1385, 1387, 1391  
 Territory Tidy Towns awards 1056, 1108, 1111, 1118, 1184, 1573  
 Third party insurance, cost to Gove residents 1291  
 Trade mission to Sabah 1112  
 Toxic waste disposal facility 1496  
 Uluru -  
     Board of Management 1490  
     restrictions 1491  
 University College 1113, 1115, 1118, 1123, 1204  
 Vandalism 1099  
 Wallabies, field killing for human consumption 1280  
 Water supply, Anningie community 878, 1119, 1124, 1566  
 Water resources 1120, 1121, 1124, 1497  
 Yulara, accommodation 1492  
 Yuendumu -  
     Sports 1284, 1494  
     youth centre 1566

#### BILLS

Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment (Serial 156) 1344  
 Adoption of Children (Serial 234) 951  
 Agricultural Development and Marketing Amendment (Serial 212) 1329  
 Appropriation (Serial 218) 802, 958, 979  
 Araluen Arts and Cultural Act Repeal (Serial 246) 1154, 1377  
 Building Amendment (Serial 205) 1071  
 Coal Amendment (Serial 225) 1044  
 Companies (Application of Laws) Amendment (Serial 247) 1164, 1420  
 Conservation Commission Amendment (Serial 210) 1329  
 Credit Unions Amendment (Serial 244) 1163  
 Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Amendment (Serial 242)  
 1155, 1414  
 Crown Lands Amendment (Serial 231) 1152  
 Darwin Port Authority Amendment (Serial 249) 1329, 1561  
 Electoral Amendment (Serial 178) 1365  
 Electricity Commission Amendment (Serial 251) 1327, 1559  
 Firearms Amendment (Serial 243) 1271  
 Futures Industry (Application of Laws) (Serial 219) 1166  
 Housing Amendment (Serial 214) 1422  
 Law Officers Amendment (Serial 230) 1272, 1421  
 Mineral Royalty Amendment (Serial 237) 973  
 Motor Accidents (Compensation) Amendment (Serial 241) 1149, 1343  
 Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 248) 1326  
 National Trust (Northern Territory) Amendment (Serial 217) 1078  
 Northern Territory Heritage (Serial 236) 920  
 Northern Territory Land Corporation (Serial 208) 1329  
 Payroll Tax Amendment (Serial 207) 1043  
 Payroll Tax Amendment (Serial 252) 1413  
 Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Amendment (Serial 200) 1074  
 Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) (Serial 229) 972, 1171

Silicosis and Tuberculosis (Mine-workers and Prospectors) Amendment  
(Serial 227) 1168  
Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 245) 1162  
Statute Law Revision (Serial 216) 1078  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 228) 1271  
Taxation (Administration) Amendment 1043  
Territory Insurance Office Amendment (Serial 220) 1072, 1097  
Territory Loans Management Corporation (Serial 209) 1329  
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 211) 1329  
Totalisator Administration and Betting Amendment (Serial 233) 1162, 1552  
Traffic Amendment (Serial 240) 1150  
Trespass (Serial 239) 1164  
Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment (Serial 213) 1422  
Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment (Serial 250) 1328, 1429  
Work Health (Serial 232) 955, 1081, 1340, 1430, 1545

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES 1071

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr Coulter 1074  
Mr Tuxworth 1131

LETTER FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE QUEEN 786

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Care of the physically and intellectually disabled 789  
Federal government's policy on NT education matters 1530  
Funding of local and community governments 1059  
NT government failure to plan for orderly development of Alice Springs 1134  
Toxic waste disposal facility 1402  
Trade Development Zone 1295

MESSAGES FROM ADMINISTRATOR

Work Health Bill (Serial 232) 883

MOTIONS

Censure of government 1499  
Discharge of items from Notice Paper 1380  
Discharge of Work Health Bill (Serial 203) from Notice Paper 955  
Kormilda and Yirara Colleges 922  
Noting papers -  
Auditor-General's Annual Report 1985-86 787  
Auditor-General's Report on Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement 1310  
Children's Services Task Force Report 1212  
Distribution Committee Report 789, 1251  
documents relating to sacred sites 1558  
Land Matters Upon Statehood 1397  
Local Government Grants Commission Annual Report 1210  
Menzies School of Health Research Report 1132  
New Parliament House Committee Report 787  
Publications Committee Report 1559  
Railway Executive Group Report 968  
Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee report 1401  
Noting statements -  
Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government 1222  
cyanide spill 887

Office of Women's Affairs 1323  
University College of the Northern Territory 1317  
Peace and nuclear disarmament 894  
Privileges Committee membership 1563  
Reference to Privileges Committee 978, 1544  
Reference to Public Accounts Committee 952  
Reference to Standing Orders Committee 919  
World Heritage listing of Kakadu stage 2 749

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr D.W. Collins 918  
Mr Dale 1295

#### PETITIONS

Katherine fire station, staffing levels 786  
Mining in national parks 785  
Palmerston swimming pool 1059  
Smoking in the work place 1059  
Wells Creek Road, sealing 786  
Yirara College 883

#### STATEMENTS

Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government 1220  
Cyanide spill 883  
Deputy Chairman of Committees 1071  
Electorate secretaries, conditions of employment 1133  
Office of Women's Affairs 1317  
Public Accounts Committee 1133  
Reference to Privileges Committee 1544  
TIO annual report 789  
University College of the Northern Territory 1311

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Araluen Arts and Cultural Act Repeal Bill (Serial 246) 1154  
Darwin Port Authority Amendment Bill (Serial 249) 1560  
Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) Bill (Serial 229) 1171  
Totalisator Administration and Betting Bill (Serial 233) 1547

#### TABLED PAPERS

Auditor-General -  
Annual Report 1985-86 787  
Report on Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement 1310  
Children's Services Task Force Report 1210  
Distribution Committee Report 787  
Documents relating to sacred sites 1558  
Land Matters Upon Statehood 1397  
Local Government Grants Commission Annual Report 1209  
Menzies School of Health Research Report 1131  
New Parliament House Committee Report 787  
Publications Committee Report 1559  
Railway Executive Group Report 960  
Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee Report 1401

BELL N.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Amoonguna, health services 1194  
Areyonga, health services 1194  
Ayers Rock -  
    apology by Willesee program 1277  
    temporary closure of 1275  
Health services for Jay Creek, Areyonga and Amoonguna 1194  
Housing Commission, executive housing scheme 1192  
Jay Creek, health services 1194  
Palmerston -  
    bus service 1381  
    recreation facilities 1382  
SPIEL awards 1574

BILLS

Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment (Serial 156) 1348  
Appropriation (Serial 218) 830, 987  
Araluen Arts and Cultural Act Repeal (Serial 246) 1378  
Housing Amendment (Serial 214) 1422  
Totalisator Administration and Betting Amendment (Serial 233) 1553  
Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment (Serial 213) 1422  
Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment (Serial 250) 1429  
Work Health (Serial 232) 1340, 1471

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Federal government's policy on NT education matters 1535  
NT government failure to plan for orderly development of Alice Springs 1134

MOTIONS

Kormilda and Yirara Colleges 946  
Noting paper, Distribution Committee Report 1270  
Noting statement, Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government 1231  
Peace and nuclear disarmament 894, 915

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Totalisator Administration and Betting Bill (Serial 233) 1549

COLLINS B.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment debates 1569  
Alcorta, Frank 1187  
Channel 8 broadcasts 1187  
CSIRO, Kapalga research area 1099  
Cyclists, dangerous practices of 1390  
Education in Aboriginal communities 1392  
Hansard -  
    on-screen editing 1185  
    Parliamentary Record, placement on computer 1185  
    transcript of question time 1185  
Kakadu video 1099  
Kapalga research area 1099  
Legislative Assembly, annual report of department 1185  
Madden, Dr Richard 1188  
Matters of Public Importance 1568  
Menzies School of Health Research report 1186  
Palmerston bus service 1391

Standing orders 1567  
Teachers, high turnover 1392  
Tender system, problems with 1391

#### BILLS

Appropriation (Serial 218) 817, 1026  
Companies (Application of Laws) Amendment (Serial 247) 1420  
Electoral Amendment (Serial 178) 1373  
Futures Industry (Application of Laws) (Serial 219) 1166  
Law Officers Amendment (Serial 230) 1421  
Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Amendment (Serial 200) 1074  
Statute Law Revision (Serial 216) 1078

#### MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Federal government's policy on NT education matters 1541

#### MOTIONS

Censure of government 1507  
Kormilda and Yirara Colleges 937  
Noting papers -  
    Children's Services Task Force Report 1214  
    Distribution Committee Report 1262  
Noting statement, Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government 1242  
Peace and nuclear disarmament 907  
Reference to Standing Orders Committee 919  
World Heritage listing of Kakadu stage 2 754

#### COLLINS D.W.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Alice Springs -  
    power reticulation 1484  
    south post office 1484  
Jindalee radar facility 1051  
Territory Tidy Towns awards 1108

#### BILLS

Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment (Serial 156) 1357  
Appropriation (Serial 218) 861  
Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Amendment (Serial 242) 1416  
Darwin Port Authority Amendment (Serial 249) 1561  
Housing Amendment (Serial 214) 1423  
Payroll Tax Amendment (Serial 207) 1043  
Statute Law Revision (Serial 216) 1080  
Taxation (Administration) Amendment 1043  
Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment (Serial 213) 1423  
Work Health (Serial 232) 1094

#### MOTIONS

Noting paper, Distribution Committee Report 1260  
Peace and nuclear disarmament 898  
World Heritage listing of Kakadu stage 2 766

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION 918



COULTER B.F.

BILLS

Appropriation (Serial 218) 871, 980  
Coal Amendment (Serial 225) 1046, 1048  
Mineral Royalty Amendment (Serial 237) 973

MOTIONS

Noting statement, cyanide spill 887  
World Heritage listing of Kakadu stage 2 761

STATEMENT

Cyanide spill 883

DALE D.F.

ADJOURNMENT

Anningie community water supply 1125  
Milingimbi artifacts 1198  
Petrol sniffing -  
    Bickerton Island 1197  
    deterrent action 1197  
    imposition of penalties through legislation 1196  
    use of outstations for rehabilitation 1196  
Water supply, Anningie community 1125  
Water resources 1125

BILLS

Appropriation (Serial 218) 1041  
Araluen Arts and Cultural Act Repeal (Serial 246) 1154, 1380  
Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Amendment (Serial 242)  
    1155, 1418  
Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) (Serial 229) 972, 1177, 1179  
Totalisator Administration and Betting Amendment (Serial 233) 1557

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Care of the physically and intellectually disabled 799  
Funding of local and community governments 1063

MOTIONS

Noting papers -  
    Children's Services Task Force Report 1212, 1217  
    Local Government Grants Commission Annual Report 1210  
Noting statement, Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government 1222, 1247

PERSONAL EXPLANATION 1295

STATEMENT

Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government 1220

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) Bill (Serial 229) 1171

TABLED PAPERS

Children's Services Task Force Report 1210  
Local Government Grants Commission Annual Report 1209

DONDAS N.M.

ADJOURNMENT

Second-reading speeches, tabling 1578  
SPIEL awards 1577

BILLS

Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment (Serial 156) 1358  
Appropriation (Serial 218) 834, 984  
Building Amendment (Serial 205) 1071  
Crown Lands Amendment (Serial 231) 1152  
Darwin Port Authority Amendment (Serial 249) 1329, 1562  
Housing Amendment (Serial 214) 1426  
Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 248) 1326  
Traffic Amendment (Serial 240) 1150  
Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment (Serial 213) 1423  
Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment (Serial 250) 1328

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

NT government failure to plan for orderly development of Alice Springs 1145

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Darwin Port Authority Amendment Bill (Serial 249) 1560

EDE B.R.

ADJOURNMENT

ABC sports coverage, lack of 1055  
Alice Springs -  
    Aboriginal social clubs 1393  
    alcohol consumption 1393  
    alcohol-related offences 1394  
Anningie community water supply 878, 1119, 1566  
Grants Commission funding 1121  
Madden, Dr Richard 1054, 1199  
Member for Jingili, comments about member for Arnhem 1283  
Mount Allan Station 1485  
Petrol sniffing, deterrent action 1198  
Rapid Creek Water Gardens 1283  
Settlement paid to senior public servants on termination 1199  
Water supply, Anningie community 1119, 1566  
Water resources 1120  
Yuendumu -  
    Sports 1284  
    youth centre 1566

BILLS

Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment (Serial 156) 1359  
Agricultural Development and Marketing Amendment (Serial 212) 1334  
Appropriation (Serial 218) 802, 984  
Coal Amendment (Serial 225) 1044, 1046  
Conservation Commission Amendment (Serial 210) 1334  
Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Amendment (Serial 242) 1417  
Darwin Port Authority Amendment (Serial 249) 1561  
Electoral Amendment (Serial 178) 1372  
Electricity Commission Amendment (Serial 251) 1559  
Housing Amendment (Serial 214) 1426  
Northern Territory Land Corporation (Serial 208) 1334  
Payroll Tax Amendment (Serial 207) 1043

Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) (Serial 229) 1180  
Silicosis and Tuberculosis (Mine-workers and Prospectors) Amendment  
(Serial 227) 1169  
Territory Insurance Office Amendment (Serial 220) 1073  
Territory Loans Management Corporation (Serial 209) 1334  
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 211) 1334  
Totalisator Administration and Betting Amendment (Serial 233) 1554  
Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment (Serial 213) 1426  
Work Health (Serial 232) 1092, 1432, 1546

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

NT government failure to plan for orderly development of Alice Springs 1142  
Toxic waste disposal facility 1402  
Trade Development Zone 1304

MOTIONS

Censure of government 1515  
Kormilda and Yirara Colleges 922, 949  
Noting papers -  
    Distribution Committee Report 1259  
    Land Matters Upon Statehood 1398  
Noting statements -  
    Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government 1222  
    cyanide spill 887  
Peace and nuclear disarmament 894  
World Heritage listing of Kakadu stage 2 768

PETITION

Yirara College 883

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Totalisator Administration and Betting Bill (Serial 233) 1548

FINCH F.A.

ADJOURNMENT

CSIRO, Kapalga research area 1124  
Kakadu video 1124  
Member for Wagaman -  
    comments about member for Arafura 1122  
    comments about member for Stuart 1292  
University College 1123  
Water resources 1124

BILLS

Appropriation (Serial 218) 865  
Darwin Port Authority Amendment (Serial 249) 1562  
Housing Amendment (Serial 214) 1422  
Silicosis and Tuberculosis (Mine-workers and Prospectors) Amendment  
(Serial 227) 1168  
Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment (Serial 213) 1422

MOTIONS

Noting papers -  
    Distribution Committee Report 1266  
    Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee report 1401

TABLED PAPER

Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee report 1401

FIRMIN C.C.

ADJOURNMENT

Australia-based trawlers for surveillance 1183  
Australian reserve pilots scheme 1050  
Cubillo, Edward Francis, death 1098  
Darwin, parking in CBD 1098  
Defence desert storage area for redundant weaponry 1049  
Emergency telephone number 1048  
Territory Tidy Towns awards 1184  
Vandalism 1099

BILLS

Appropriation (Serial 218) 803  
Motor Accidents (Compensation) Amendment (Serial 241) 1343  
Territory Insurance Office Amendment (Serial 220) 1073  
Work Health (Serial 232) 1088, 1433

MOTION

Noting paper, Distribution Committee Report 1252

HANRAHAN R.A.

ADJOURNMENT

ABC sports coverage, lack of 1057

BILLS

Agricultural Development and Marketing Amendment (Serial 212) 1335  
Appropriation (Serial 218) 841, 1022  
Conservation Commission Amendment (Serial 210) 1335  
Motor Accidents (Compensation) Amendment (Serial 241) 1149, 1344  
Northern Territory Land Corporation (Serial 208) 1335  
Territory Insurance Office Amendment (Serial 220) 1097  
Territory Loans Management Corporation (Serial 209) 1335  
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 211) 1335

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

NT government failure to plan for orderly development of Alice Springs 1138  
Trade Development Zone 1300

MOTIONS

Censure of government 1507  
Noting paper, Distribution Committee Report 1252, 1264  
Reference to Privileges Committee 978  
Reference to Public Accounts Committee 953  
Reference to Standing Orders Committee 920  
World Heritage listing of Kakadu stage 2 785

STATEMENT

TIO annual report 789

HARRIS T.

ADJOURNMENT

Amoonguna, health services 1206  
Areyonga, health services 1206  
Darwin Institute of Technology and University College 1204  
Dibb Report 1570  
Health services for Jay Creek, Areyonga and Amoonguna 1206

Housing Commission, executive housing scheme 1204  
Jay Creek, health services 1205  
Matters of Public Importance 1572  
Petrol sniffing -  
    deterrent action 1206  
    imposition of penalties through legislation 1206  
Territory Tidy Towns awards 1573  
University College 1204

#### BILLS

Appropriation (Serial 218) 856, 1039  
Silicosis and Tuberculosis (Mine-workers and Prospectors) Amendment  
    (Serial 227) 1170

#### MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Care of the physically and intellectually disabled 793  
Federal government's policy on NT education matters 1538

#### MOTION

Kormilda and Yirara Colleges 942

#### PETITION

Smoking in the work place 1059

#### HATTON S.P.

#### ADJOURNMENT

CSIRO, Kapalga research area 1103  
Cycle bridge between Casuarina and Rapid Creek 1202  
Kakadu video 1103  
Kapalga research area 1103  
Nightcliff -  
    beach stinger net 1203  
    cycle path to Casuarina 1202  
    traffic congestion 1203  
Settlements paid to senior public servants on termination 1201

#### BILLS

Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment (Serial 156) 1355  
Agricultural Development and Marketing Amendment (Serial 212) 1338  
Appropriation (Serial 218) 812, 959  
Conservation Commission Amendment (Serial 210) 1338  
Electoral Amendment (Serial 178) 1369  
Northern Territory Land Corporation (Serial 208) 1338  
Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) (Serial 229) 1176  
Territory Loans Management Corporation (Serial 209) 1338  
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 211) 1338  
Work Health (Serial 232) 955, 1432, 1545

#### MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Trade Development Zone 1307

#### MOTIONS

Censure of government 1519  
Noting papers -  
    Distribution Committee Report 789  
    documents relating to sacred sites 1558  
    Land Matters Upon Statehood 1397  
    Railway Executive Group0 Report 968

Noting statement, Office of Women's Affairs 1323  
World Heritage listing of Kakadu stage 2 749, 780

STATEMENT

Office of Women's Affairs 1317

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Totalisator Administration and Betting Bill (Serial 233) 1551

TABLED PAPERS

Distribution Committee Report 787  
Documents relating to sacred sites 1558  
Land Matters Upon Statehood 1397  
Railway Executive Group Report 960

LANHUPUY W.W.

ADJOURNMENT

Darwin Airport, access to shops 1286  
Davis, Stephen, sale of Aboriginal artifacts 1195  
Funding for recreational facilities in remote communities 1196, 1286  
Member for Jingili -  
    comments about member for Arnhem 1285  
    invitation to visit Arnhem Land 1286  
Milingimbi artifacts 1195  
Petrol sniffing -  
    imposition of penalties through legislation 1196  
    use of outstations for rehabilitation 1196

BILLS

Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment (Serial 156) 1353  
Appropriation (Serial 218) 850  
Silicosis and Tuberculosis (Mine-workers and Prospectors) Amendment  
    (Serial 227) 1168

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Care of the physically and intellectually disabled 797

MOTIONS

Noting paper, Distribution Committee Report 1269  
Noting statement, Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government 1246  
World Heritage listing of Kakadu stage 2 765

LEO D.M.

ADJOURNMENT

Community assistance funding 1118  
Crocodiles -  
    at Nhulunbuy 1290  
    living in harmony with 1290  
Education in Aboriginal communities 1118  
Nhulunbuy, third party insurance costs 1291  
Northern Territory government, involvement in land claim hearings 1291  
Territory Tidy Towns awards 1118  
Third party insurance, cost to Gove residents 1291  
University College 1118

BILLS

Appropriation (Serial 218) 845, 958, 983  
Araluen Arts and Cultural Act Repeal (Serial 246) 1377  
Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Amendment (Serial 242) 1414  
Darwin Port Authority Amendment (Serial 249) 1561  
Electoral Amendment (Serial 178) 1368  
Motor Accidents (Compensation) Amendment (Serial 2451) 1343  
National Trust (Northern Territory) Amendment (Serial 217) 1078  
Northern Territory Heritage (Serial 236) 920  
Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) (Serial 229) 1171, 1179  
Silicosis and Tuberculosis (Mine-workers and Prospectors) Amendment (Serial 227) 1170  
Totalisator Administration and Betting Amendment (Serial 233) 1556  
Work Health (Serial 232) 1436

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Care of the physically and intellectually disabled 789  
Funding of local and community governments 1060

MOTIONS

Noting statements -  
Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government 1238  
cyanide spill 893

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Darwin Port Authority Amendment Bill (Serial 249) 1560  
Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) Bill (Serial 229) 1171  
Totalisator Administration and Betting Bill (Serial 233) 1547

MCCARTHY T.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Anthony's Lagoon 1564  
BTEC 1564  
CSIRO, Kapalga research area 1109  
Horticulture, government input 1564  
Kakadu video 1109  
Kapalga research area 1109  
Territory Tidy Towns awards 1111  
Trade mission to Sabah 1112

BILLS

Agricultural Development and Marketing Amendment (Serial 212) 1337  
Appropriation (Serial 218) 852  
Conservation Commission Amendment (Serial 210) 1337  
Northern Territory Land Corporation (Serial 208) 1337  
Territory Loans Management Corporation (Serial 209) 1337  
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 211) 1337

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Toxic waste disposal facility 1410

MOTIONS

Noting paper, Distribution Committee Report 1265  
Noting statement, Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government 1235  
World Heritage listing of Kakadu stage 2 772

MANZIE D.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Darwin Institute of Technology and University College 1115  
University College 1115

BILLS

Appropriation (Serial 218) 823, 987  
Companies (Application of Laws) Amendment (Serial 247) 1164  
Credit Unions Amendment (Serial 244) 1163  
Electricity Commission Amendment (Serial 251) 1327  
Firearms Amendment (Serial 243) 1271  
Futures Industry (Application of Laws) (Serial 219) 1167  
Law Officers Amendment (Serial 230) 1272  
Payroll Tax Amendment (Serial 252) 1414  
Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Amendment (Serial 200) 1077  
Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 245) 1163  
Statute Law Revision (Serial 216) 1081  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 228) 1271  
Totalisator Administration and Betting Amendment (Serial 233)  
1162, 1555, 1557  
Trespass (Serial 239) 1164  
Work Health (Serial 232) 1435

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Federal government's policy on NT education matters 1530  
Funding of local and community governments 1070

MOTIONS

Censure of government 1506  
Kormilda and Yirara Colleges 928  
Noting paper, Menzies School of Health Research Report 1132  
Noting statement, University College of the Northern Territory 1317

STATEMENT

University College of the Northern Territory 1311

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Totalisator Administration and Betting Bill (Serial 233) 1547, 1551

TABLED PAPER

Menzies School of Health Research Report 1131

PADGHAM-PURICH C.N.

ADJOURNMENT

Agile wallabies for human consumption 1280  
Cigarette advertising on buses 1387  
Cyclists, dangerous practices of 1388  
Discrimination 1105  
Goat milk 1487  
Mango Harvest Festival 1107  
Meat inspection service, DPI 881  
Menzies School of Health Research report 1191  
Northern Territory Public Service, competition with private enterprise 1192  
Public servants, paying hobbies 1191  
Reptiles, permits for 1389  
Stiles, Edward James Lester, death 881  
Wallabies, field killing for human consumption 1280



BILLS

Agricultural Development and Marketing Amendment (Serial 212) 1329  
Appropriation (Serial 218) 808  
Conservation Commission Amendment (Serial 210) 1329  
Electoral Amendment (Serial 178) 1365  
Northern Territory Land Corporation (Serial 208) 1329  
Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Amendment (Serial 200) 1076  
Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) (Serial 229) 1172, 1179  
Territory Loans Management Corporation (Serial 209) 1329  
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 211) 1329  
Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment (Serial 250) 1429

MOTION

Peace and nuclear disarmament 914

PALMER M.J.

BILL

Totalisator Administration and Betting Amendment (Serial 233) 1553, 1557

MOTION

Noting paper, Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee report  
1401

PERRON M.B.

ADJOURNMENT

Crocodiles in Darwin Harbour 1289  
Hansard, transcript of question time 1578  
Kakadu debate, television coverage 1573  
Northern Territory government, involvement in land claim hearings 1287  
Television coverage of Kakadu debate 1573

BILLS

Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment (Serial 156) 1345  
Appropriation (Serial 218) 982  
Coal Amendment (Serial 225) 1045, 1047  
Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Amendment (Serial 242) 1415  
Futures Industry (Application of Laws) (Serial 219) 1167  
Totalisator Administration and Betting Amendment (Serial 233) 1553, 1556  
Work Health (Serial 232) 1436

MOTION

Noting statement, Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government 1228

STATEMENT

Public Accounts Committee 1133

POOLE E.H.

ADJOURNMENT

Alice Springs -  
airlines policy 1189  
Airport facilities 1189, 1492  
Courts, inadequacy of sentencing 1190  
Ghan Preservation Society 1383  
Lasseter's Casino extensions 1188

Road signage -  
    on Territory highways 1285  
    value to tourism 1285  
Stiles, Edward James Lester, death 877  
Uluru -  
    Board of Management 1490  
    restrictions 1491

MOTION

Peace and nuclear disarmament 905

SETTER R.A.

ADJOURNMENT

ABC sports coverage, lack of 1056  
Federal taxes and charges 1126  
Member for Jingili, comments about member for Arnhem 1277  
Petrol sniffing -  
    Bickerton Island 1279  
    deterrent action 1279, 1492  
    imposition of penalties through legislation 1277  
Rapid Creek Water Gardens 1057, 1493  
Territory Tidy Towns awards 1056  
Yuendumu Sports 1494

BILLS

Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment (Serial 156) 1351  
Agricultural Development and Marketing Amendment (Serial 212) 1336  
Appropriation (Serial 218) 868, 1023  
Conservation Commission Amendment (Serial 210) 1336  
Northern Territory Land Corporation (Serial 208) 1336  
Statute Law Revision (Serial 216) 1979  
Territory Loans Management Corporation (Serial 209) 1336  
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 211) 1336

MOTION

Noting statement, Aboriginal affairs initiatives by government 1238

SMITH T.E.

ADJOURNMENT

Cigarette advertising on buses 1384  
CSIRO, Kapalga research area 1113  
Darwin Institute of Technology and University College 1113  
Hansard, transcript of question time 1180  
Kakadu video 1113  
Madden, Dr Richard 1052, 1181  
Manhole covers, importation of 1387  
Manhole ladders 1387  
Northern Territory Public Service, politicisation 1054  
Settlements paid to senior public servants on termination 1182  
Tender system, problems with 1385  
University College 1113

BILLS

Adoption of Children (Serial 234) 951  
Agricultural Development and Marketing Amendment (Serial 212) 1329  
Appropriation (Serial 218) 979  
Conservation Commission Amendment (Serial 210) 1329

Housing Amendment (Serial 214) 1424  
Northern Territory Land Corporation (Serial 208) 1329  
Payroll Tax Amendment (Serial 207) 1043  
Taxation (Administration) Amendment 1043  
Territory Insurance Office Amendment (Serial 220) 1072  
Territory Loans Management Corporation (Serial 209) 1329  
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 211) 1329  
Totalisator Administration and Betting Amendment (Serial 233) 1555  
Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment (Serial 213) 1424  
Work Health (Serial 232) 1081, 1431, 1546

#### MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Funding of local and community governments 1066  
Trade Development Zone 1295

#### MOTIONS

Censure of government 1499, 1525  
Noting papers -  
    Children's Services Task Force Report 1212  
    Distribution Committee Report 1254  
    Menzies School of Health Research Report 1132  
    Railway Executive Group Report 968  
    Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee report 1401  
Noting statement, Office of Women's Affairs 1323  
Peace and nuclear disarmament 912  
Reference to Public Accounts Committee 952  
World Heritage listing of Kakadu stage 2 777

#### PETITIONS

Katherine fire station, staffing levels 786  
Mining in national parks 785  
Palmerston swimming pool 1059  
Wells Creek Road, sealing 786

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Totalisator Administration and Betting Bill (Serial 233) 1548

#### STEELE R.M.

##### ADJOURNMENT

Draft Katherine Rural Area Plan, response to 1380  
Katherine -  
    traffic congestion 1121  
    strategy plan 1121  
Standing orders 1563  
Territory Tidy Towns awards 1122  
Water resources 1121

##### BILL

Appropriation (Serial 218) 848

##### MOTION

Noting paper, Distribution Committee Report 1257

#### TUXWORTH I.L.

##### ADJOURNMENT

Anyinginyi Health Centre 1498  
Toxic waste disposal facility 1496  
Water resources 1497

VALE R.W.S.

STATEMENTS

Electorate secretaries, conditions of employment 1133  
Reference to Privileges Committee 1544